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THE WHIPS.

ASTONISHING as the assertion may seem to the uninitiated, parliamentary government, as at present organised, could not be carried on without the Whips. Upon their exertions very frequently depends the fate of a ministry, or the triumph of a policy. They are the real autocrats of the House: without their advice no step is taken; without their aid no movement would be successful. The plan of the sessional campaign having been fixed by the Cabinet, it is left to the Whips to carry out the details. They it is who choose the battle-ground, marshal the forces on either side, regulate the hostilities, and decide as to the duration of the fight. They are supreme in everything but the initiation of measures.

The Whips work in darkness. They carry on their operations secretly, and their entire confidence is accorded to none but the chiefs. Their ways are manifold, and their action mysterious. Silence is their only wear. People who take their knowledge from the morning newspaper are apt to imagine that public questions are determined merely by the dictum of the great politicians, and that when Mr Gladstone or Mr Disraeli has introduced a bill upon a particular subject, nothing remains but to let it be debated, and to take the division in due course. This is true enough, so far as it goes; but between the debate and the calling of the division, there is a vast gulf fixed, and here it is that the experienced Whip manifests his usefulness.

Properly speaking, there are but four Whips—two in the pay of the government, and two in the service of the Opposition. The duty of selecting men to fill the office is onerous and difficult. Tact, temper, prudence, knowledge of the world, coolness, self-reliance, and unslumbering watchfulness, are among the necessary qualifications for the office. Many members who possess these qualities in largest endowment will not accept the berth, for there is attached to it something of the stigma of subordination; and those who consent to wear its livery are practically cut off from taking part in the strife of the discussions, and earning those

distinctions for the achievement of which men enter parliament. On the other hand, the greater proportion of those who would esteem it an honour to be dignified with the appellation of Whip, have not the requisite capabilities. The choice being from these two causes consequently limited, great pains are taken by both parties in the state to retain by every means in their power the services of good men, when they have been fortunate enough to secure them. Mr Brand, the late Liberal Whip, was acknowledged on all hands to be one of the ablest who ever held the office. Under the chieftainship of Lord Palmerston, he led his party session after session through victorious lobbies; and had it not been that failing health compelled the sacrifice, Mr Gladstone would never have accepted his resignation. Colonel Taylor, again, the principal Whip of the Tory government, is also justly esteemed for his professional cleverness, and great pains have been taken by Lord Derby and Mr Disraeli to retain his valuable services. This anxiety will be easily understood when it is mentioned that the gallant colonel was one of the main instruments in the formation of the famous Tea-room party, which preserved the Conservatives from defeat, and ultimately was the cause of the passing of the Household Suffrage Reform Bill.

Though nominally there are but two Whips on each side, the number is in reality greater. In the House itself, there is a third or junior Whip, who occupies somewhat of the position of an apprentice, learning the mysteries of the craft from his elders, and aspiring in his turn to the position of chief teller. In addition to these, there is an outside firm of professional Whips—lawyers, whose influence and knowledge are in the domain of whipping somewhat akin to that which is exercised by the famous Spofforths in electioneering matters. These legal Whips are, on the whole, the most useful, and though concealed from the general eye, exercise the greatest influence. They know whatever is publicly to be learned of the antecedents, family history, position, and popularity of the various members of the House. They

know the leanings and bias of their opinions, and the influences that will most readily act upon them, either in securing their actual support, or turning aside the edge of their active opposition. They supply the indoor Whips with hints and reports, and give them professional counsel when such is demanded.

A parliamentary general without his Whip would be like a military commander without his aide-de-camp. The battle would rage quite as vehemently with or without the presence of the latter; but the general would be quite unable to send orders in times of crisis to particular parts of the field, or to receive statements as to how matters were progressing—where the line was weak, or the attack strong, or the enemy was chiefly concentrating his strength. The Whips are the go-betweens of the two great parties in parliament. They are messengers and negotiators, heralds, ambassadors, and political diplomatists. Say that the chief of the Opposition meditates an assault upon the government, upon the question of finance or non-intervention. His first movement is to call the Whips to his aid, and consult with them as to the prospects of success. Will, or will not, a motion of no-confidence in the ministry, upon either of these points, be successful? The Whips shall see—the Whips shall report. Thereupon, these gentlemen go to and fro among their party; mingle with the throng in the Lobby, the Smoking-room, and the Library; and elicit the general opinion. In due course, they give in their views. Should it be sufficiently favourable to justify an attack upon the government position, hostilities are at once declared by a notice of motion. This important step taken, the Whips on both sides meet, and hold a joint-consultation. Members who are desirous of speaking give in their names to the Whips, and these gentlemen having added up the number upon their books, decide how long the debate shall last. Colonel Taylor, let us suppose, has a list of thirty Conservatives, and Mr Glyn, an equal number of Liberals, who want to deliver their opinions—all men of weight and position, whom it would not be politic to disappoint. The rank and file the Whips do not trouble themselves to accommodate; they make sure that all the influential men shall have the opportunity of utterance—the rest they do not care for; and it is arranged that the debate shall be concluded in four nights. Were it not for this agreement between the rival Whips, a debate upon Reform or the Irish Church would last several weeks; there are hosts of mediocrities who wish to make speeches, and are systematically denied the gratification. On the last night of a discussion, when midnight is approaching, and the time at which the Premier shall rise to close the debate is nigh, it is quite a usual sight to see twenty and thirty third-rate men springing up simultaneously, striving for precedence of speech. Scores are invariably disappointed; and many are the orations of fervid senators that are thus ruthlessly strangled by the Whips, and remain ingloriously in the heads and pockets of their authors, till autumn brings its annual canvass of constituencies, and its annual denunciation of the self-seeking and corruption of an unscrupulous and extravagant ministry.

The Whips not only in a large measure regulate who is to speak, but also the order and sequence of the speaking. They compare their rival note-books, and arrange the list of succession. Thus,

the Conservatives, learning that Mr Lowe is prepared with a slashing onslaught against the ministry, and that he intends to speak on Thursday night, arrange perhaps to pit against him Lord Stanley, Mr Gathorn Hardy, or some other of their ablest men, whose opinion shall carry the most influence in the country as against that of the member for Calne. Consequently, if half-a-dozen of the mediocrities of Conservatism, despising the authority of the Whips, rise at the same time as Lord Stanley or Mr Hardy, the Speaker, being aware of the arrangement, decides in favour of the noble lord, or the Home Secretary, as the case might be, who would, in parliamentary etiquette, be held to have caught the presidential eye. The succession of speakers in a great debate is thus regulated, like the figures on a chess-board, according to their weight and worth. The keenest logician on the one side is pitted against the keenest logician on the other; the greatest lawyer of the Tories is matched against the greatest lawyer of the Whigs; the finest rhetorician of the Treasury bench is met by him who possesses the gift of eloquence in rarest perfection among the ranks of the Opposition. Thus, Sir Hugh Cairns was always 'put up' against Sir Roundel Palmer; shrewd Mr Henley perhaps against Mr Bright; Sir Stafford Northcote against Mr Mill; Lord Stanley against Mr Horsman; Lord Cranbourne against Mr Lowe—care being taken, although not always successfully, to match the opponents as completely as the choice of men permitted. Except during the solitude of the dinner-hour, there is no chance of an ambitious mediocrity breaking through this arrangement. The Speaker being in the confidence of the Whips, takes care that his eye shall only be 'caught' by him for whom the honour has been arranged—although, be it added, this rule is only adhered to upon great occasions.

Onerous, however, as are the duties of the Whip in this respect, they form but a tithe of what he has actually to accomplish. He it is who is the medium of communication between the prime minister and the Opposition. The former very likely foresees that unless he can disarm somewhat of the virulence of the latter, he may find himself in a minority. Then steps in the faithful Whip, plays his part, and averts the danger; he hints to some of the more pliable of the Opposition that if a modified motion is proposed, it will be accepted by the head of the government. He declares that the Treasury have it in contemplation to construct a harbour of refuge at Flamborough, advance a heavy loan for docks at Cardiff, subsidise the university of Little Pedlington, or arrange a new scale of superannuation allowances for the faithful clerks of the Plymouth Custom-house. Waverers are caught by these means, and the edge of wrath turned aside. The support of neutrals is gained by somewhat similar means. The Whip arranges that the Premier shall bow to Brown publicly in the Lobby, and be suave and complimentary; that the Premier shall inquire of Jones as to the aftermath in the Norfolk meadows, and exchange opinions upon the breadth of turnips and potatoes in the Peak of Derbyshire. The Whip arranges that it shall be hinted at mysteriously that the Premier is much stricken with Robinson's ability, and that stranger things had happened than his selection for the post of Secretary to the Treasury or Admiralty. The Whip arranges that Mrs

Chiltern Hundreds shall be invited to the Duke's *salon* or the state banquet. And in this humble diplomatic way much support is gained, or opposition disarmed.

But the principal task of the Whip is to keep the forces of his party well together, and to keep them in good fighting-array. There is always a large number of members who require much persuasion to induce them to come to the front. Some have so little interest as to which side wins, that they won't attend any but the most important divisions. Others may be out of town, and will not put themselves to the trouble of coming up merely for the purpose of recording their votes and going home again. Others plead illness of a serious nature which will prevent them attending: all the reasons advanced in Scripture against attending the feast are employed; and with these the ingenious Whip has to deal to the best of his ability. If the occasion be one of little political significance, he will perhaps accept the reasons, and say nothing; but should a change of ministry hang on the issue of a debate, all his ingenuity is exerted to bring his men to their posts. First of all, he tries the ordinary persuasion, of intimating by circular that, on a certain evening, business of the utmost importance to the party is to be transacted, and beseeching them to be in their place. Those who do not respond to this appeal are plied with arguments of a stronger character. Perhaps the influence of some great man in the neighbourhood is brought to bear, by way of persuasion; perhaps hints are thrown out of a coming redistribution of official emoluments; perhaps some patronage is bestowed just at the proper moment; perhaps an invitation to dine with the prime minister is conveyed; or some other lever made use of which is powerful for conviction. In the case of the sick, some discrimination requires to be employed. Should the illness prove to be very serious, there is of course an end of the matter; but if it be one wherein no danger will be run by removal, all the temptations of comforts during the journey to London, in the shape of exclusive first-class railway carriages and luxurious mattresses, are held out as baits; and the invalids appear in due course at the division, with their arms slung, leaning upon crutches, or enjoying the pleasant roominess of Bath-chairs.

The last memorable instance of a great 'whip' was made by Mr Brand, the Liberal teller, on the occasion of the fall of the Russell-Gladstone cabinet, upon the defeat of their Reform Bill in 1866. That occasion was signalised by the presence of men who had not been seen in the House for years. Old men who had long passed the Psalmist's limit, the sick and afflicted, dilettanti valetudinarians, the lame, the paralysed, had been brought together to meet the momentousness of the crisis. Some had been summoned from beyond the Alps; others had been wooed from the prostration of their couches; many had been stopped in mid-career of their travels; one had been taken from the delights of his marriage-trip, and several from the bed-sides of relatives in extremity. The entire list of members on both sides the House was swept, and the telegraph employed in all directions. The result was, that with the exception of a few who were absolutely unable to be present, the whole of the members were whipped-up for the division.

Another technical duty of the Whip is to 'make' and to 'keep' the House. Forty gentlemen are

required to form a quorum, and a House is not considered to be 'made' till that number is present. Should a quorum not be assembled at four o'clock, the sitting is suspended, and there is no sederunt that evening. Such an event very rarely occurs on a government night, and it can only result from the carelessness of the Whips. The members of the cabinet, the under-secretaries of departments, and the various government officials, are always sufficient, with the addition of a few private members, to 'make' a House; and all that remains for the Whip to do is to bustle about, and by the aid of messengers and the local telegraph, see that these come down to their places in time. The House having been 'made,' cannot be 'counted out' unless the attendance dwindles below forty, and a member draws the Speaker's attention to the fact. Should the government resolve to 'keep' a House, however, it is impossible to count it out. There may be only fifteen members present on the benches, but the Whips take care that there shall be other thirty or forty within hail, in the Smoking and Billiard Rooms and the Library, who can go in and complete the necessary quorum before the sand-glass has run down. Frequently, the task of keeping a House is very difficult, and on these occasions the Whips have to exercise all their skill, and keep members in genial chat over the wine and cigars. A good deal of money is expended by the skillful Whip in this and in other ways; but the head government Whip has a salary of twelve hundred pounds a year by way of compensation; and there is always the 'secret-service' money, which figures so mysteriously in the estimates, and which can be drawn upon when the occasion arises.

The Whips, by virtue of their office, know a good deal about the haunts and habits of many of the members, and this knowledge they have very frequently to put in practice. An important debate, we shall say, threatens to close abruptly three hours before the termination was reckoned upon. The House is nearly empty. The small men—the men who have a duty to perform to their constituents—the men who feel the importance of the crisis upon the future interests and well-being of the country—the men who hold that it is the duty of even the humblest representative to speak out boldly and uncompromisingly upon the subject—the men, in short, who are rarely heard except during the dinner-hours, when the great men are absent, have talked about and about the question, and turned it outside in and inside out, and quoted statistics, and read blue-books, till the whole senatorial heart is sick, and the head faint. There is but one sleepy minister upon the Treasury bench, who has been left to act as sentry, to see that the government flank be not unexpectedly turned. The Whips going to and fro, ceaselessly, silently, unrestingly, discover, to their amazement, signs of the discussion dying out of sheer atrophy. The greater part of the House is away at dinner, and it will not do to take a division before they return. The Whips are in despair! By no manner of means. They have seen too much service to allow themselves to be found wanting on such an emergency. They have two or three men in reserve of more than a forty-parson power of talk, men who could have overcome in volubility the celebrated innkeeper in *Gil Blas*. They rush to the Billiard or the Smoking Room, summon these semi-official gentry, and send them into the House with

instructions to speak at all hazards, and keep the debate open till relief arrives.

And a truly pitiable spectacle it is this keeping of the debate open. Three men will sometimes talk at immense length; and it is by no means an unusual thing for one man, who has neither light, experience, nor counsel to throw upon the subject himself, to prose away for three hours, running over the few ideas he has to the end, and then commencing again at the beginning, and repeating them with slight variations, much as a fiddler produces a whole fantasia of melody by a few alterations upon a simple air.

Meanwhile, whilst this fantasia is proceeding, the Whips are hard at work sounding the recall of the forces. Messengers, cabs, and the telegraph are put in active requisition. The clubs have the news flashed to them; the Premier is apprised of the new aspect of affairs; all the precincts of Westminster are explored to spread the intelligence. The Whips know that there is a great evening-party at the Duchess of Carrabas's, and away rattles a Hansom to summon the swains from the languishment of the drawing-room. The Opera-house is also apprised, and Honourables and Right Honourables are torn from the seductive music of Bellini to come down and help to swell the rude strife of the party cheering. Some of the younger members the Whips know where to find at almost any hour of the night. They are familiar with their haunts; and if they are not to be found at one, they are sure to be at the other. Thus from many quarters are the members summoned to give their votes, many growling at having their night's enjoyment ruthlessly interrupted, and all in very ill mood to listen to anything but a great speech.

In two hours after the Whips have sent forth their summons, the House, which had been nearly empty, is crowded in every part. The dandies congregate in their swallow-tails and white ties in an exquisite crowd at the bar, and sigh as they think of the mazy waltz which they have left behind at Carrabas House. The Treasury bench is crowded with the whole strength of the ministry. The small men strive to continue the speaking, but they are swept away in a whirlwind of wrathful cheers. The time has come for the leader of the Opposition and the Premier to measure weapons. The whole House is excited; expectation sits on every countenance; and the hosts on either side are prepared with ready lungs to support their respective champions.

PICTURES IN THE CLOUDS.

THOUGH here in the north we are only too familiar with that 'pestilent congregation of vapours' which wraps about the greater part of our globe like a winding-sheet, it is only at rare intervals that we witness that artistic arrangement of the fleecy substances which converts them into pictures. To complete this process, the spectator's mind must be brought by circumstances into exact harmony with the aspect of external nature; that is, must be drowsy, dreamy, full of fancies, and, through a sort of imaginative intoxication, ready to mould the features of everything around him into shapes corresponding to the ideal types existing in his mind. Most persons have enjoyed this pleasure on a summer evening when, immediately after sunset,

the sky is painted with more colours than language has terms to express—green islands in golden seas, with promontories and headlands jutting out into bays of amethyst, encircled or overhung by mountains, towering in rainbow tints to the empyrean. Here and there, through gaps in this gorgeous creation, the eye catches glimpses of an ocean of splendour, apparently stretching away into infinite space, and throwing forth from its surface all imaginable hues, so blended and intermingled that each in turn appears to be predominant. Every moment as we gaze, the scene changes, now suffused with an additional flush of brilliance, now growing dimmer as the light shifts its irradiations; while the islands stretch out into continents, the mountains raise or lower their peaks, or break into fragments, drift away, and vanish before some unfelt breeze. Then Rembrandt's pencil seems to take possession of the sky, fills it with dusky ridges, valleys, rocks, cities, figures, till at length all is swept into annihilation by the besom of night.

I remember to have once enjoyed, in the near neighbourhood of the tropics, the sight of a vision in the firmament, which I have often attempted to describe. My back was to the south, the sun in his westerly declination was touching with his golden rim the edge of the desert; while before me, towards the north, the sky presented an appearance so very grand, that my whole frame, as I gazed upon it, thrilled with a sort of ecstasy. We talk of this or that as artistic, and think we compliment Nature when we put a pencil in her hand, and compare her paintings with those of man; but man's hand never approached—in vastness, in grace, in beauty, in rapturous sublimity—the stupendous picture then unfolded before me by a combination of light and vapour. Over the summit of a forest which, stretching away right and left, constituted, though near at hand, the limit of my horizon, I beheld what I felt at the time to be a representation of the celestial Olympus. From a plain, dotted here and there with magnificent cities, arches, domes, spires, columns, temples, theatres, arose, by soft gradations in the background, a mountain with many peaks, which stood out relieved sharply against the blue. In the interval between the base and the summit, the uplands moulded themselves into every conceivable form of beauty—clefts like those giant ones of the Andes, rocky projections and defiles, eminences clothed with trees, bare precipices glowing with light, hanging crags, smooth sloping lawns leading up to the dwellings of the gods—the whole kindled and flaming with splendour, knowing apparently no limit; expanding east and west—here in sinuous folds, there in intermingled heights and depths; but withal so luminous, so soft, so bright, that the imagination could have dwelt upon its features for ever. Nor was this mighty landscape so evanescent as things so beautiful usually are—it remained stationary long enough to impress itself for ever on my memory, and then faded reluctantly, as it were, with farewell flashes and coruscations of loveliness, which seemed forcibly to carry away the imagination from earth to

heaven. It would have been practicable for an artist of quick thought and ready pencil to sketch at least an outline of the composition, so slowly did its parts separate and melt into the glowing atmosphere.

Some phenomena connected with clouds may help to render intelligible several mythical portions of history which tell of spectral or angelic warriors mingling in the encounters of men, and assisting one or other party in winning the victory. How such appearances are physically produced, may be left for future consideration, as I am only dealing just now with the characteristics of the phenomena themselves; yet, sometimes, when descriptions are correct and complete, they suffice to indicate the causes which produce what they represent by words. Occasionally, in the western extremity of the Mediterranean, where the sea narrows as it approaches the straits, lofty arches of clouds, extending from Spain to Africa, span the flood like the roof of a huge vault. Upon the surface of this roof, a traveller, returning from the East, beheld an extraordinary picture, painted by means identical, probably, with those which, in the neighbourhood of Scylla and Charybdis, give fleeting existence to the Fata Morgana, of which I shall presently speak. From the ship's deck on which he stood, the traveller, looking westward, saw in the clouds a fleet in full sail, though with the hulls upward, and the masts and rigging pointing to the sea; and the likeness of the whole was so exactly photographed that he knew it to be the armament of England advancing to meet the French and Spaniards, then cruising in great force near Barcelona. The beauty of such aerial landscapes consists not only in the exact rendering of shape and proportion, but in the mirror-like fidelity with which colours are reflected, and the strange power by which objects are multiplied a thousand-fold, so as to suggest the idea of an infinite series of figures. Our fleet, for example, as it swept before the wind eastward from the jaws of the straits, seemed to cover the whole expanse of the sky

Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
In Vallombrosa.

If fleets may thus be reflected from the clouds, so likewise surely may armies, and accordingly we find in old traditions accounts of what the superstitious old mistook for hosts of spectres flourishing their weapons, and charging each other in the sky. When fame took possession of these rumours, it was careful to station the scene of the marvellous appearances in countries far remote, so that it should be no easy matter for sceptics, should any such present themselves, to investigate into the truth or falsehood of the reports. Thus, the Greeks of the mother-country attributed to the experience of their distant colonists on the coasts of Italy or Sicily, which were regarded as far-off places in those days, the pleasure of witnessing battles in the air, accompanied not only by the flash and gleam of arms and armour, but also by the clang of spears and shields, which re-echoed along the firmament. A similar spectacle was said to be witnessed in Sogdiana, where, at the present day, we behold instead those terrestrial clouds which, clinging close to the surface of the earth, torture the thirsty wayfarer with illusory appearances of water, upon which are often represented rocks, ruins, strings of laden camels, together with men, and those eagles, vultures, and other fierce birds of ill

omen which generally hover over the toiling caravan.

Everywhere, in the temperate zone, clouds delight our imagination, sometimes by the brilliance of their colours, sometimes by their strange and ever-varying metamorphoses. 'Do you see yonder cloud,' says the Danish prince to the parasitical old courtier whom he makes his butt, 'that's almost in shape like a camel?' To which the flatterer answers: 'By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed!' The fancy of the questioner changing more rapidly than the vapour he looked at, he sportively observes: 'Methinks, it is like a weasel.' Nothing daunted, the pliable courtier assents: 'It is backed like a weasel.' Not content with having transformed the ship of the desert into the cousin-german of a Danish rat, Hamlet goes on to try the politeness of Polonius: 'Or like a whale?' To which the tame father of the fiery Laertes replies: 'Very like a whale.' The changes of shape here ludicrously glanced at are often performed by the Proteus of the air almost as rapidly as they could be described in words, when the rack happens to be driven by a nimble breeze. But it is the 'lazy pacing clouds' that present those magic prospects to the eye, which poetry, great as it is its power, and multiplied as are its resources, vainly strives to portray by language.

Perhaps the most sublime scenes discoverable in the clouds are those of which we obtain a momentary glimpse during thunder-storms at night, when the lightning piercing through and illuminating the vapour reveals the aspect of a vast shadowy world. One summer night among the Alps, while moving along a tolerably lofty ridge, I was overtaken by a storm, which, beginning in the north, gradually swept southward through the narrow rents and valleys by which the higher Alps are divided from each other. No one will deny that the country underlying the vapoury creation is itself invested with extraordinary magnificence; but compared with the overhanging world, with its gigantic peaks, crags, ravines, torrents, abysses, valleys of interminable length, lakes, caverns, overhanging precipices, forests, cataracts, flashing for a moment into existence, clothed with blue flame, heaving, writhing, tossing, like some great continent quivering with earthquake—compared, we say, with this, the Savoyard Alps are altogether tame and poor. One feature of this spectacle surpassed all the rest in grandeur—a stupendous tunnel, miles in height, and of immeasurable extent, through which the eye seemed to penetrate into the very womb of chaos. The sides of this tunnel were ribbed with columns resembling towers in diameter, and rising in awful curves to the vault above, which glowed and coruscated with living light. The poet who speaks of effects produced

When some great painter dips
His pencil in the hues of earthquake and eclipse,

might possibly have conveyed some idea of what prose, at all events, is unable to delineate. The scene expanded so limitlessly to the right and left, was thrown back so far, and rose above to so great an altitude, that although the imagination may follow its dimensions, our language cannot. Rapidly, moreover, as the thunder-claps followed each other, many changes were produced between every flash by the writhing, twisting, heaving, sinking of the vapour in agony, so that a countless succession

of views might be said to have presented themselves during the continuance of the storm. To augment the effect which these phenomena were of themselves well calculated to produce upon the mind, the sight was enjoyed in the midst of thunder-peals which seemed to make the mountains rock, while the electric fire, piercing in a thousand streams through the vapour, whirled it aloft, or dashed it downwards in ceaseless eddies and convolutions. Nor is this all. Over the whole splendour of that night, a thick veil of melancholy hangs suspended; for one who stood by me then, invested with youth and rare beauty, has herself since become a shadow, and passed away like the unsubstantial shapes which on that night we gazed on together.

Wordsworth beheld by day, in the north of England, a cloud landscape, which for calm beauty may be paralleled with the stormy magnificence the aspect of which I have above endeavoured to suggest rather than describe:

The appearance instantaneously disclosed
Was of a mighty city—boldly say
A wilderness of building, sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,
Far sinking into splendour, without end!
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright,
In avenues disposed; there, towers begirt
With battlements that on their restless fronts
Bore stars—illumination of all gems.

When a man is alone with nature, monopolising the delight she affords, he may doubtless enjoy emotions more concentrated and powerful than when others are present to share with him; but in remembrance it is quite otherwise, for then the images of loved faces, turned up in wonder at the show, mingle intimately with recollection, and render it doubly sweet, or perhaps in some cases doubly sad. There is a gap in the Jura chain a little above Ferney, from which, at a sudden turn of the road, you catch, if you are a young traveller, your first view of the Alps. Half the pleasures of this life are based on delusion. It was far on in May, yet for many hours we had been pushing forward through ice and snow, which almost blocked up the road, and hung in gigantic flakes from the pine-trees overhead; yet, when we reached the gap above mentioned, our eyes looked down upon a lovely valley, in which summer was already basking in all its pride, beauty, and warmth. Cities, towns, villages, churches, villas, with humbler and smaller homesteads dotting the greenest of hollows, slopes, meadows, carrying down the sight to the edge of the blue lake, which, like a long expanse of molten turquoise, lay gleaming at the foot of the mountains. And what mountains! On nearly all occasions, reality falls short of our expectations; here it surpassed them, because the vast semicircle of Alps, curving round from Chambery to the Tyrol, white, dazzling, and piercing the blue ether with a thousand pinnacles, had been invested, though we then knew it not, with tenfold grandeur by super-imposed Alps of clouds, which gave them the degree of altitude demanded by the imagination. In the course of the day, all this vast theatrical apparatus would doubtless disperse, and leave the mountains to make what impression they might by their own forms and

proportions; but the Alps, at our first view, owed probably two-thirds of their elevation, majesty, and luminous splendour to the clouds.

More impressive even than this was a cloud-scene beheld in Sicily. Traversing the backbone of the island, about midnight we reached a point commanding a view of a narrow but very deep gorge, which, at the moment, was bridged across about half-way down by a thunder-cloud, the magnificence of which may have been enhanced to us by an apprehension of danger, suggested by the sulphurous smell which filled the atmosphere, and the bursting thunder, which seemed to rend the earth beneath our feet. The cloud seemed at first a floor of ebony, interveined and fretted with a thousand patterns by the lightning, which went quivering through it, as it rose slowly towards us, suggesting rather than causing a sense of suffocation. As the mass rose, it spread with the increasing breadth of the valley; while the thunder increased in loudness every moment, and the cloud threw forth bolts of flame—white, blue, or yellow—as it surged upwards, speedily to envelop us in its black and horrible folds. When it reached the elevation on which we stood, we felt as if plunged in a caldron of sulphur, so overwhelming was the stench, and so terrible was the lightning, which, at every flash, sheathed my companions, their mules and horses, in blue flame, and seemed on the point of converting us and our beasts into a jelly. The horse on which I rode—a black stallion, remarkable for his fire and fearlessness—trembled in every muscle, and refused to advance a step. Presently, we were delivered from our fears by the rain, which, bursting forth from the pores of the cloud as from a sluice, in a few minutes drenched us to the marrow.

A more complete contrast to this scene can hardly be imagined than that which, under the name of Fata Morgana, is sometimes beheld in the Strait of Messina, both from the Italian and Sicilian shores. In certain conditions of the atmosphere, which physical science has not hitherto succeeded in explaining, a dense vapour runs like a wall of considerable height along the flood, about mid-channel between the island and the continent; and upon this wall Nature displays one of her most beautiful phenomena. Suddenly, the spectator beholds, stretching over the sea, a gorgeous city, with terraces, domes, battlements, cathedrals, spires, towers, arches, fountains, and private dwellings of extraordinary grandeur, separated from each other by lofty trees, under which are seen moving figures on foot and horseback, with carriages and animals of various kinds. All these objects are invested with colours more brilliant than those of nature; and as the Fata possesses a limitless power of reduplication, everything appears to be multiplied upwards of a thousandfold, so that the representation, as it stretches backward over the waves, appears to be interminable. Towards the end of the last century, a writer of much ingenuity, long resident at Reggio, published an octavo volume on the Fata Morgana. This was the Abbatte Dominico Minasi, who prefixed to his work a long folded engraving, which attempted, though without colours, to convey some idea of the spectacle. Minasi, as may be supposed, was somewhat liberal in speculation and conjecture, and with laudable industry collected accounts of all similar phenomena in various parts of the world. I remember—for the book is no longer

within reach—the description of a small lake in South America, on the lofty shores of which the fairy Morgana sometimes made her appearance, though enveloped with less splendour than she exhibits in her Italian home. Notwithstanding, however, the immense number of persons who now visit the peninsula, we are not aware of any recent traveller who has described this phenomenon, nor do we recollect to have met in any ancient writer a single allusion to it. Several conditions are necessary to the production of the show. The coast on both sides is mountainous and highly picturesque, and the narrowness of the channel produced by the severance of Sicily from the mainland, tends to throw both the sea and the overhanging vapour into swift and ever-shifting currents. The conditions under which the fairy builds her palaces are somewhat complex: the winds must be hushed, the tide at its height, and the sun's ray must strike the waves at an angle of forty-five degrees. If the spectator then place himself on any point of the high ground lying behind Messina or Reggio, with his back to the east, so as to command a view of the whole bay, he is likely to discern the beautiful illusion for which the strait is celebrated. Reggio, it is well known, has in all ages suffered from violent earthquakes, which have more than once levelled it with the ground; the air, consequently, must be always more or less charged with those gases which overhang the seats of volcanic agency; and it is upon these gases, in all likelihood, that the Fata paints her pictures. One of the peculiarities of the phenomenon is extremely remarkable; we mean its incessant change of form, for no sooner has the eye caught a glimpse of a series of lofty pillars, pines, cypresses, or towers, than they sink in an instant to half their height, bend over the flood into arches, mass themselves into castles, expand into colonnades more magnificent than those of Palmyra, change into theatres, temples, aqueducts, or shapeless ruins, and stretch so far into the background, that they appear to touch the volcanic islands which stud the Æolian Sea. On a bright moonlight night, at early dawn, or in the evening twilight, those islands themselves suggest the idea of being little more than a succession of clouds hovering over the sea, so dim, vapoury, and unsubstantial do they seem; and this idea is greatly strengthened if, perchance, a lunar rainbow spans the crest of Lipari or Stromboli, as a curtain of silver mist floats gently from east to west.

One of the most beautiful of all cloud-pictures is familiar to every one—the solar rainbow, which seems to exhibit its greatest span and altitude when it rises upon the ocean. Still, there is something more curious, rare, and spectral in the lunar rainbow, which, though here in the north all white, yet exhibits as many shades of white as there are colours in the solar bow. Among the Canaries, Azores, and Cape de Verd Islands, the lunar bow imitates, in colours as well as in form, that of the sun, though its tints are fainter and more evanescent. Often, when the clouds are in the proper condition for producing rainbows, whether lunar or solar, you behold a succession of them rising up, one behind the other, so as to form a gorgeous arcade. Occasionally, that portion of the circle which is wanting to complete the round, may be seen lying shattered, as it were, or rather doubled up on the grassy plain, or upon the surface of the ocean, where, by the quivering of the

waves, the eye is presented with a multitude of prisms, trembling, changing, and melting into each other. Such are the appearances which we call pictures in the clouds.

A NIGHT AT FIRE ISLAND.

In the autumn of 1850, I was living in New York, in which city I had, some few months before, established myself in business as the representative of a manufacturing firm in the west of England.

Towards the latter part of November, a gentleman of the name of Stuyvesant, whose acquaintance I had made the previous summer at Islip, a small watering-place on the south side of Long Island, invited me to accompany him on a wild-duck shooting excursion to the same locality.

As I had no very pressing business engagements just then, I accepted the invitation, and made arrangements for leaving town for a few days; but at the last moment, while waiting for my friend at the South Ferry Station, or Dépôt, as it is termed in the United States, of the Long Island Railway, a note was put into my hands by a coloured servant, informing me that the sudden illness of one of Mr Stuyvesant's children would prevent his fulfilling his engagement.

Now, duck-shooting is rather dull work by one's self, and had I received this intelligence only an hour earlier, I should either have deferred my journey until Mr Stuyvesant was able to accompany me, or have sought among my acquaintance for another companion. As I had, however, already secured my ticket, and had also had my traps placed in the baggage-car, it seemed to me, under the circumstances, a pity to relinquish the trip. I therefore resolved to go down to Islip alone, thinking it probable that I might meet some one at the hotel bound upon the same errand as myself; or, at the worst, if left entirely to my own resources, might manage to find amusement enough for the two or three days I purposed spending in the country.

When I arrived at Islip, however, not only was there no one from the city stopping at the hotel, but, on mentioning the object of my visit to the landlady, I learned that the prospect before me was not a very encouraging one.

'Waal, neow,' said the good woman, 'yer see the old man's down with the rheumatics, and the boys have gone tu the "Banks" with Uncle Abner, so I dunno heow you'll git over tu the Beach, onless Sam Thayer kin take yer across. But we'll see what can be done in the morning.'

The morning came, but no Sam Thayer—that individual having gone 'clamming' at too early an hour for the message sent by my landlady to reach him. The rest of the maritime population of the village was similarly engaged. Some were at the fishing-banks, some oyster-dredging, and some, like the aforesaid Sam, clam-digging. After no little difficulty, however, I found one man who owned a boat, of which he was willing to let me have the use, provided I liked to undertake the management of it myself, as he had, he said, business to attend to which would prevent his going with me. Now, I had not, at that time, had much experience in handling a sail-boat; but as the one in question was quite small, and what is termed in the United States 'cat'-rigged—that is,

had the mast stepped very far forward, and carried no jib—I thought I should be able to manage it without much difficulty. I therefore closed with the offer, and set out immediately after breakfast for Fire Island, which, as the day was fine, and there was only a light breeze from the north-west, I reached before noon easily enough.

Fire Island, or the South Beach, as it is otherwise called, is simply a narrow strip of sand, varying in breadth from three or four hundred yards to three-quarters of a mile—running parallel with Long Island, at a distance of three or four miles from the shore. It extends the whole length of the island—some one hundred and forty miles—but its continuity is broken by various inlets, and the bay which lies between it and Long Island abounds with fish of every description.

In no part rising higher than a few feet from the level of the sea, and at a little distance scarcely discernible over the level of the horizon, Fire Island is, and always has been, a terror to all seamen navigating this part of the Atlantic. Like our English Goodwins, 'it hath been the grave of many a tall ship,' which, in hazy weather, has drifted with the current upon its treacherous sands. It was here, indeed, only so recently as the preceding July, that the bark *Elizabeth* from Leghorn, in which Margaret Fuller (Countess Ossoli) was returning to her native land, after a lengthened sojourn abroad, was wrecked, within a cable's length of the shore; and she, her husband and child, together with nearly the whole crew, perished within sight, and barely beyond the reach, of the terror-stricken spectators on the beach, who, nevertheless, being unprovided with any of the necessary appliances for such an emergency, were powerless to save them. For, while there is no coast in the world better lighted than that portion of the eastern shore of the United States lying between Cape Cod and Cape Hatteras, beyond this the government has done little or nothing; life-boats, or indeed life-saving apparatus of any description, being seldom to be met with, even where their need is most urgent.

Although, with the exception of a few scanty tufts of coarse grass scattered here and there, vegetation there is none, the whole of Fire Island being one ugly monotonous dead-level of sand, it is yet a favourite summer resort of the inhabitants of New York and adjacent cities, on account of its combining the advantages of excellent surf-bathing on the outer or Atlantic side, with a well-sheltered bay, admirably adapted for boating and fishing on the other.

At the time of which I speak, in addition to a good many hotels and boarding-houses scattered throughout the various villages lying on the south side of Long Island, and from which, during the summer, parties were in the habit of crossing over to the 'Beach,' there was a hotel, known as *Dominy's*, on Fire Island itself, about a mile from the inlet, at the entrance to which stands the light-house. The hotel in question was kept open only four or five months in the year, and at the period of my visit, had been, I was aware, closed for the season since the early part of October. The keeper of the light-house, however, an old pilot of the name of Smith (every one is a Smith or a Snedricor in this part of the island), would be willing, I knew, to afford me accommodation for the night, provided the only spare room of which his establishment could boast was not already engaged. As I wished to avoid, if possible, the

loss of time and inconvenience attendant upon a return each evening to Islip, I determined to ascertain at once, before I did anything else, what my prospects were in this respect; so, having secured the boat to the stake, placed for the purpose opposite *Dominy's*, I walked over to the light-house.

When I entered the building, I found Smith about to sit down to dinner with his family, and I casually noticed that, although there was no one else then in the room, plates were laid for two other persons. The old seaman had served in the frigate *Constitution*, in the war of 1812; and, on the occasion of my former visit, I had become quite a favourite of his, by listening to his yarns—some of them rather tough ones—about the doings of 'old Ironsides,' as that vessel was called by seamen of the period. He now came forward, and shook me heartily by the hand, but with the air and manner of a person greeting an acquaintance upon the same social level as himself. An Englishman of the same class would not have thought of doing so; but I had been long enough in the United States to be aware that I should have given mortal offence had I shewn the least hesitation in accepting the proffered civility; and I, of course, was careful to avoid doing so. No one, indeed, is quicker to perceive, or to resent any assumption of social superiority on the part of those with whom he comes in contact, than the native of the States. No inequality of position or circumstances will make him submit to being spoken to in the tone which, in England, the man in broadcloth adopts, as a matter of course, towards the man in fustian; and it is a failure to make allowances for this difference between the character and social usages of the Americans and our own people, that is, I am convinced, the cause of most of the complaints we hear from travellers of the rudeness and incivility to which they have been subjected.

'Waal, now,' said the old man, 'I'm raal glad tu see yer, Mr Mason, and that's a fact. When did yer come up from York?'

'Only last night,' I replied. And after a few minutes' conversation, I mentioned the object of my visit. I learned, however, much to my disappointment, that I had been anticipated as regards engaging the spare room at the light-house.

'I only wish I'd known yer had been a-coming,' said Smith, after expressing his regret that he could not accommodate me. 'But two young fellers from the city came over from Babylon early this morning for a couple of days' shooting, and wanted tu sleep here. They're up-stairs cleaning themselves now. I didn't much like the look of them; but Miss' [Anglicé, Mrs] 'Smith let out the room warn't engaged, so I had no excuse for refusing to let 'em have it.'

'Well,' I replied, 'it can't be helped; but it's rather inconvenient, especially as I'm single-handed in the boat.'

While I was speaking, the two individuals referred to entered the room. They were both unmistakable 'Bowery Boys;' and the strongly marked Celtic characteristics of their physiognomies proved them at once to belong to the class known as Irish-Americans—a class which enjoys the unenviable reputation of contributing more largely, in proportion to its numbers, than any other to the criminal population. In the state of New York alone, seventy per cent. of all the offences which are brought under the cognizance

of the tribunals are committed by individuals of Irish parentage, while their fair proportion would be less than *twenty* per cent.

Both of the young men—they were neither of them apparently over twenty—had somewhat repulsive countenances, and their hair was plastered down over their ears, in what was termed, in those days, 'soap-locks,' from the fact of the class to which they belonged lying under the imputation of using soap, rather than any of the usual appliances of the toilet, for the purpose of imparting smoothness to the hair. Indeed, these same soap-locks were as offensive in the eyes of all decent American citizens, as were the luxuriant ringlets of the Cavaliers in those of the Puritans generally, and of worthy old Prynne in particular.

In accordance with the usage of the country, Smith introduced us to each other, and I had the peculiar gratification of shaking hands with two as thorough 'rowdies' as it has ever been my fortune to come across. As the young men seated themselves at the table, mine host pressed me to do so likewise; and although it was some hours earlier than I was in the habit of dining, the sea-air having given me an appetite, I accepted his invitation. During the meal, but little was said, for there was an offensive familiarity about the language and manner of the two men which was offensive to me; and finding, from the brevity of my replies to their remarks, that I was not disposed to enter into conversation with them, they shortly relapsed in a sulky silence.

It so happened that I had occasion to take out my pocket-book for the purpose of shewing Smith the vignette on a new five-dollar bill, recently issued by one of the city banks, the subject of which, being marine, I knew would interest him. As I did so, I noticed the quick eager glance given by one of the men at the contents of the wallet, in which, indeed, were bank-notes for a considerable amount, which I had received only on the morning of my departure from town, and had forgotten to deposit. The incident at the time made but slight impression on my mind, but later, every detail connected with it recurred vividly to my memory.

As soon as the young men had finished their dinner, they quitted the apartment, and shortly afterwards the house. When, a few minutes later, I also was leaving the light-house, Smith followed me out on to the piazza, or *stoup*, as it is styled in the state of New York, the old Dutch term being still retained there. After looking carefully round the horizon, and glancing at the barometer, which hung by the door, he said: 'Mr Mason, I don't much like the look of the weather; the wind is getting round to the east, and the glass is falling. We shall have a storm before many hours are over, I'm a-thinking; so you'd best not make it late to-night before you get back to the village.'

'Why,' I replied, laughing, and rather surprised at prognostications which appeared to my landman's eye to be quite unwarranted by the aspect of things—'why, there's not a cloud in the sky, nor a breath of wind stirring, and the sea is as smooth as glass.'

'Don't trust to much to that,' rejoined the old man seriously, and evidently piqued at my incredulity. 'I've followed the sea, boy and man, for forty year—mostly as pilot on this here coast—and I only wish I was as sure of a thousand dollars as I am that we shall have a storm in less than twelve hours. However, you need not be uneasy,'

he continued; 'an easterly wind never takes one onawares here: it's slow, but sure. You've time enough for three or four hours' sport; but don't let it be after sundown before you start for home.'

'All right!' I said, as I shook my companion by the hand: 'I'll get away in good time, I promise you.'

I walked over to the boat, got out my decoys, and, after strolling a short distance along the beach, found what appeared to be a suitable spot for setting them. I was not at first very successful; but as the day began to decline, the fowl became more plentiful, and absorbed in the sport, I quite forgot the lapse of time. Warned at last by the growing darkness, I looked at my watch, and found it was already past the hour at which I had intended to have returned to Islip.

Hastily collecting my *impedimenta*, I walked briskly over to *Dominys*, but, not a little to my surprise, found the boat gone. At first, I supposed the occurrence to be purely accidental; that the painter dragging in the water had, as sometimes happens, chafed against the rough edge of a stone until the strands had parted; but, on looking at it more closely, I perceived, by the cleanness of the cut, that the rope had been severed by some sharp instrument. I was very much annoyed, and guessed immediately that the trick had been played me by the rowdies I had met at the light-house, in revenge for the manner in which I had received their advances. However, there was no help for it; remain on the island I must; and the only thing that was now for me to do was to return to Smith's, and pass the night there, submitting with a good grace to the inconvenience of sleeping on the floor or in an arm-chair.

As I trudged along through the heavy sand, I noticed various ominous indications of an impending storm, which I had hitherto been too preoccupied to regard. A dense black cloud hung over the horizon to the east; the wind was rising rapidly; and the sullen roar of the waves, as they broke upon the shore, seemed to give assurance that the old pilot's prognostications had been well grounded. The tide was nearly at the full, and I observed that the sea was in some places considerably above the usual high-water level. This gave me no uneasiness, however; for although this part of the sand-bank was rather narrow, I had heard that there was no instance, even in the worst weather, of the waves ever sweeping completely across it. I hurried on, nevertheless, as fast as the darkness would permit me, and was within about a quarter of a mile of the light-house, when, to my dismay, I found my further progress barred by an unexpected obstacle. The sand-bank, at this part, was traversed by one of those inlets of which I have already spoken. It was only a few yards in breadth, and was crossed by a bridge, consisting of half-a-dozen piles driven into the sand, with a couple of stout planks laid across them; it had no hand-rail or balustrade, and was indeed of the most primitive construction. To my great disgust, I found the planks gone; whether swept away by the action of the sea, which now rushed in an angry flood through the inlet, or removed by other means, I could not tell. In any case, it was quite impossible to cross except by swimming, and that was an alternative which, encumbered as I was, I did not care to embrace.

What was to be done? I had not, I could see, much time for deliberation, for at any moment the

storm might burst upon me in all its fury, and to be drenched to the skin in the month of November is not particularly agreeable. The only resource left me, that I could perceive, was to return to *Dominy's*, force open a door or window, and pass the night there. This idea I proceeded at once to put in execution, and was so fortunate as to reach the house before the rain began to fall. I found one of the side-doors fastened with a pad-lock; by means of a stone, I easily dislodged the staple, and effected an entrance into the building. Being a smoker, I, of course, had matches with me; and tearing up a newspaper I happened to have in my pocket into spills, I lighted one, and looked about me. The apartment in which I found myself—the dining-room of the hotel—extended the whole length of the building—some seventy feet. Viewed by the dim light I carried, which scarcely illumined more than a few paces around me, it presented a decidedly gloomy appearance; and the whole of the furniture having been removed, it had that deserted look a room always wears under these circumstances. I glanced at the hearth; there were the ashes of a wood-fire still in it, the back log being only partially burned through; and as I knew that the house had been kept open until the end of September, at which season the evenings are apt to be chilly, I thought it probable that I might find some fuel in one of the out-houses. Without much trouble, I managed to force open the door of the one I judged to be the wood-shed, and in it I found several pine and hickory logs. I carried half-a-dozen of them into the house, and in a few minutes had succeeded in kindling a fire, the light from which in some slight degree relieved the sombre aspect of the place.

I am, however, and always have been, singularly susceptible to the depressing effect produced upon the mind by a dimly lighted room; and in this case it could only be by a stretch of courtesy that the apartment could be said to be lighted at all, for the fitful gleams emitted by the burning logs, although they threw a ruddy glow round the hearth, scarcely penetrated the gloom in which either extremity of the hall was enveloped. Insensibly, I experienced a vague sense of uneasiness—an ill-defined impression of impending danger, which I in vain endeavoured to rid myself of. At last, so strong became the feeling, that I resolved no longer to disregard it. I had, in accordance with an invariable rule of mine, not to carry a loaded gun into the house with me, discharged my fowling-piece on my way to the boat. I now, however, proceeded to load both barrels carefully. Having done this, I examined the windows and doors of the apartment. The former had only Venetian blinds outside—the almost universal substitute for shutters in the United States—they were all securely fastened, and to force them open would be a work of some little time and difficulty. Of the two doors, one was locked on the inside; and although the key to that by which I had entered was missing, I secured it also by driving a wedge-shaped splinter of wood under the sill. Of course, I was well aware that it would require no great exertion of force to effect an entrance, but, being a light sleeper, I trusted that any attempt to do so would awaken me. Having taken these precautions, I threw myself on the floor before the fire, which I replenished from time to time, and endeavoured to concentrate my attention upon the

pages of an old number of *Harper's Magazine* I found lying on the mantelpiece.

While thus engaged, the storm, which had been so long impending, burst; the rain came down with almost tropical violence; and the wind, increasing to a gale, shook the building to its very foundation, seeming to threaten momentarily to wrest it from the piles on which it stood, and sweep it into the Atlantic. While this state of things continued, it was of course quite out of the question to think of sleep; but towards midnight the storm sensibly abated, and at last, fatigued with the exertions of the day, I had begun to doze, when I was aroused by what sounded like a foot-step in the passage-way. After an interval of a few minutes, however, all being perfectly quiet, I concluded that I had been mistaken. I stirred up the embers of the fire, threw a couple of fresh logs on it, and was about to compose myself again to sleep, when I fancied I heard some one trying the lock of the door furthest from me. Now, my sense of hearing is singularly acute; and after listening intently for a few seconds, I felt convinced that somebody was stealthily endeavouring to effect an entrance.

'Who is there? What do you want?' I called out, snatching up my gun as I spoke.

There was no answer for a moment or two, and then a voice, which I thought I recognised as being that of one of the two men I had encountered at the light-house, replied: 'We want to come in.'

'Who are you, and what are you doing here at this time of night?' was my rejoinder.

'We are the gentlemen you met at Smith's this morning,' said the same speaker. 'We got caught in the storm, and couldn't cross the creek.—But I say, boss,' he added sharply, 'let us in, will yer? We're most froze, and ain't got a dry rag on us.'

During this brief dialogue, my mind had been busily engaged in considering the best course to be pursued under the circumstances. That I was the victim of a deliberate plot, having for its object robbery, if not murder, I did not for one moment doubt, as I recalled to mind the various incidents of the day—the eager glances at my well-lined pocket-book and diamond pin, the boat cut adrift, the bridge destroyed, my footsteps dogged. Indeed, of the last fact, the fellow who had acted as spokesman had unconsciously furnished the most palpable evidence; for how else could he have been certain that the occupant of the apartment was the individual he had met at the light-house?

However, to refuse to let them in, would, I concluded, only precipitate matters; and, in fact, I had really no shadow of justification for excluding them from a shelter, to which I had no stronger claim than that of mere priority of occupancy. Besides, I argued, whatever might be my private convictions, I had no right to assume, until they were guilty of some overt act, that they had any evil intentions towards me.

After a barely momentary hesitation, therefore, I rose, and, carrying my gun in my hand, opened the door.

The two men, without a word of thanks, pushed brusquely past me towards the fire. They had evidently been drinking, but only sufficiently to bring out the innate ruffianism of their characters, and not to an extent that in any way impaired their powers of speech or movement. From the first words they addressed to me, it almost seemed as though they were determined, like the braves

in the *Inconstant*, to 'pick a quarrel with me, and cut my throat like gentlemen.'

'Why the Blazes did you keep us waiting so long?' was the civil remark with which I was greeted as I returned to the fireplace, before which they stood drying their dripping garments.

Affecting not to perceive anything offensive in the language in which the question was couched, I replied that, having every reason to believe myself alone in the building, I had been, at first, somewhat surprised at the presence of strangers, and had naturally wished to know who they were before admitting them.

They grumblingly accepted my excuses; then, thinking, probably, that their conduct would appear rather suspicious, unless some explanation were afforded me of how they had spent the last few hours, the one who had hitherto acted as spokesman said that, finding the bridge gone, they had concluded to retrace their steps, and pass the night at *Dominy's*; but that, having been overtaken by the storm on their way back, they had been forced to seek shelter for a time under the lee of a vessel which had been stranded on the beach some few weeks before: he added, that they had waited there until the violence of the gale had partially subsided, and that, but for this, I should have seen them much earlier.

To my query, how it was that they knew that it was I who was the occupant of the apartment, after a slight hesitation, the reply was, that they had seen me through the Venetian blinds, from the front piazza, the light from the fire being just sufficient to enable them to recognise me. The speaker, in his turn, inquired why I also had been obliged to seek shelter at *Dominy's*, instead of returning to Islip.

In reply, I informed him of the fact of the boat having drifted from its moorings, but was careful to conceal my suspicions that the occurrence had been other than accidental.

Having removed their outer garments, both men threw themselves at full length before the fire; their guns resting by the side of the chimney-piece nearest to them. I placed mine on the opposite side, and was careful to sit in such a position that it should be ready to my hand in case of need. My amiable companions seemed, however, to have no immediate intentions of molesting me; on the contrary, they were, or affected to be, quite overcome with fatigue, and were shortly, to all appearance, fast asleep. Thinking that I could not do better than seem to follow their example, I also assumed a recumbent position, closed my eyes, and after stretching my limbs once or twice, dropped off apparently into a deep sleep. I need scarcely say, however, that I was never more thoroughly wide awake in the whole course of my life; for I felt pretty certain that if the fellows entertained any sinister designs towards me—and I had the firmest conviction that they did—it would not be long before they attempted to put them in execution.

Nor was I mistaken. After an interval of what might possibly have been less than an hour, but which seemed to me almost an age, I perceived, through my half-closed eyes, one of the two men raise his head cautiously and glance in my direction. Apparently, my attitude, together with my deep regular breathing, satisfied him that I was—what I seemed to be—sound asleep; for he nudged his companion, with whom he entered into a whispered

colloquy, the general purport of which did not reach me, although such disjointed expressions as, 'Hear the shot,' 'Blood on the floor,' 'My way best,' caught my ear. Finally, they appeared to have decided upon their plan of action, for, after taking out their handkerchiefs, and twisting and knotting them together, they both crept cautiously round towards me.

I saw their game at a glance. Their intention, obviously, was to strangle me, rifle my body, and then cast it into the sea. In this way, they would avoid the tell-tale evidence of bloodshed, and might hope to avert all chance of its being discovered that I had met my death by violence.

I experienced a species of grim satisfaction, for I felt at once that the course they had pursued rendered me master of the situation. I waited until they were within a couple of paces, when, springing to my feet, I seized my gun and levelled it at the head of the one nearest to me. Aghast, and almost petrified at my unexpected attitude, they instinctively sought their feet. It took but a second, but that second was my opportunity. Throwing myself between them and their weapons, I threatened to shoot the first who moved a step towards me.

'You scoundrels!' I exclaimed, with suppressed passion, 'I have watched you, and I overheard your devilish plot. By the heaven above me, I am sorely tempted to do justice on you with my own hand, and save the hangman trouble. Out of the house instantly; and if'—

While I was speaking, the heavy boom of a gun, borne across the water, interrupted me.

'Hark!' I continued; 'some vessel is making signals of distress; in less than an hour, the wreckers from Patchogue will be down on the beach, and if they find you here, it will go hard with you, I promise you.'

Sullenly and reluctantly, but without a word, the two ruffians, like baffled hounds, slunk from the room, and I saw them no more. Having secured the door after them, I threw open the blinds of one of the windows which looked out upon the sea. When I did so, a most painful spectacle presented itself. At a distance of barely half a mile from the shore was a large brig, one mast gone by the board, drifting helplessly towards the beach. The people on board, evidently fully conscious of their danger, were firing alarm-guns and throwing up rockets as rapidly as possible, in the hope of obtaining assistance; being ignorant, possibly, that none was at hand, and that, long before the fishermen from Patchogue could reach the spot, their fate would be decided. Blue-lights were also being burned at intervals, which rendered every object on the deck distinctly visible. No attempt seemed to be making to get out the boats, nor, indeed, could I see any; most probably, they had been washed away. The only hope for the unfortunate crew lay in the chance that the brig might strike bottom bows on, in which case, as the tide was falling, it was possible, if the vessel held together for a couple of hours, that they might be able to reach the shore; if, however, she grounded broadside to the beach, I knew that, in all probability, not a single soul would be saved.

Taking the precaution of discharging the guns belonging to my late assailants, and carrying my own in my hand, I hurried down to the shore, and waited with intense anxiety for the result. Nor was it long delayed. In less than ten minutes, the

brig struck heavily once or twice, and then became immovable. Most fortunately, however, her position was as favourable as could have been hoped for, being nearly at right angles with the beach; and in less than forty minutes afterwards, with the assistance of the wreckers from Patchogue, who had by that time reached the spot, all hands on board were rescued.

I was not idle myself during these events; and the consequence was that, when I got back to Islip the next morning, I had so severe a cold, and was so exhausted by fatigue and exposure, that it was several days before I was able to leave my bed. While lying ill, Smith came over to see me, and to him I related what had occurred.

He chuckled immensely at the successful manner in which I had baffled the designs of the two scoundrels, but appeared sorely troubled that I had let them off so easily. 'Why didn't yer shoot 'em, Mr Mason?' he said warily. 'Why didn't yer shoot 'em right down in their tracks? I'd a done it! Sich fellers as them ain't no account nohow.'

Although I was somewhat startled at the time by the old seaman's summary advice, I was subsequently rather disposed to think that it might perhaps have been better, in the interests of society, had I acted as he suggested. About five years later, two men, of the class known as 'river-thieves,' were tried and convicted, on the clearest evidence, of the murder of the mate of a vessel lying in the Hudson. Detected in an attempted robbery, they shot the unfortunate man dead on his endeavouring to arrest them; and notwithstanding the strenuous efforts made to obtain a commutation of the sentence, were, *mirabile dictu*, through the firmness of the then governor of the state, actually hung for the crime.

During the trial, I happened, from motives of curiosity, to visit the court on one occasion, and recognised at once, in the prisoners at the bar, my old acquaintances of the light-house.

SIXTY YEARS AT OXFORD.

AN Esquire Bedel of the university of Oxford, appointed to the post in 1806, has published his *Recollections* of that university. Upon the principle that those women are the best who have no biographies—nothing, that is, to demand public attention in their lives—Alma Mater should be the glory of her sex. Here is a fat book, containing her annals for more than half a century, and—not at all through the fault of the annalist, who searches for events most diligently, and by no means rejects small things—there is absolutely nothing in it. The History of Old Sarum would contain as much matter of living interest: and yet the work is characteristic too. Its exaggeration of the importance of a matter because it happens to take place within the academic walls; the admiration expressed in it for profound nobodies, never heard of beyond the precincts of their own colleges; the ludicrous self-complacency with which all that has been enacted by cap and gown is treated; and the patronising or condemnation of national events that have ventured to transact themselves out of doors, are very typical and entertaining. Nobody who reads this book* can for a moment entertain

the delusion that 'the Don' is an extinct animal, and far less that the belief in him as a sacred beast is a 'creed out-worn.' When he names 'the Head of a House,' our author adopts at once the attitude of the Siamese when approaching their superiors. It seems as if he could not be too humble in so august a presence; even when, through age or other causes, the Heads resign their sovereignty, the divinity that doth hedge a king still surrounds them in his eyes. Here is a picture of a retired potentate of this description. 'Dr Jackson, after resigning his deanery in 1809, lived in perfect retirement at Felpham, close to the sea, near Bognor. I once had the great pleasure of finding him there, having walked over from Littlehampton for the chance of seeing him. He was sitting very much as he is represented by his statue, but, of course, without the paraphernalia of his doctor's gown and large wig. He was simply dressed as a fine, venerable old man, without anything decidedly clerical in his appearance; his large Oxford wig was replaced by a very simple, one-curved, *brown wig*, which was surmounted by a large, broad-brimmed, black straw-hat. He conversed with me for some time, shewing a lively interest in the state of things at Oxford. I shall not soon forget the impression made by that interview. As he thus sat on a chair, placed for him near the edge of the low cliff, and facing the sea, with his hands (one of them holding a golden snuff-box) clasped upon the top of his walking-stick, he looked greater and grander than I ever thought him (in his greatest and grandest days), when walking stately in "Tom Quadrangle," every cap (as was then the custom) being off the head, even of tutors and noblemen, while he was in sight.' Imagine this magnificent personage 'living in perfect retirement,' and patronising the neighbourhood of Bognor!

Of the venerable Dr Routh, our author has not so much to say, but he refers in a foot-note to an arm-chair 'in which (about fifteen years before his death) the president choked very badly at dinner, and being alarmed, rushed out of the hall; retiring with the vice-president into the common room.' The wig of this learned gentleman was of such portentous size that Dr Daubeny sent it to Knaresborough Spring, in order that it might be preserved to posterity by means of petrification; which was only right; for the sight of it had often petrified others, and especially Mr Cox.

The only approach to levity which our author permits himself, while speaking of these solemn dignitaries, is his account of Dr Hoare, the Principal of Jesus College, who died in 1802. This gentleman 'was for many years only seen as he took his drive, carefully wrapped up in his carriage—it could not properly be called "taking an airing," for the windows were always scrupulously closed. Under this management, however (perhaps because of it), he lived to a great age, and might have lived still longer but for an untoward accident. He had a pet Tom-cat, which enjoyed the privilege of living in his master's study, of sleeping on his best leather-bottomed chair, and usurping the warmest berth on his hearth-rug. Unfortunately, one day, the old doctor, in seating himself, placed a leg of his chair upon one of Tom's legs—and being quite deaf, was unconscious of the pain he was inflicting, till the cat in its agony seized upon the doctor's leg and scratched it violently. The wound thus caused would not heal, and he died after lingering some days.'

* *Recollections of Oxford.* By G. V. Cox. Macmillan.

Sad as this story is, there is something exceedingly characteristic and befitting about it. Nobody would expect the Head of a House to perish from exhaustion from his efforts in the public service, we suppose; whereas the pet cat and the arm-chair are most appropriate details in such a catastrophe. Of course there was an epigram upon the event; for nothing happens in Oxford, without evoking that laborious description of wit:

Poor Dr Hoare! he is no more!
Bid the harp-strings of Cambria mourn;
The Head of a House died the death of a mouse,
And Tom must be hanged in return.

There are many more examples of this sort of university drollery cited in these *Recollections*, neither better nor worse than the above. And this is the most disappointing part of the whole work; for surely—if no great political wisdom, or literary excellence, were to be expected from that quarter—one might have reasonably looked to find in a community, where learning and leisure have it all their own way, a tolerable sprinkling of 'good sayings.' It is sad to think that there is scarcely any witticism in this volume good enough to have secured admittance into the pages of *Punch*, and if—so far as is here evidenced—the world should be so turned upside down that the grave and reverend seigniors of Oxford had to live on their wit, they would soon starve. The only really facetious person to whom Mr Cox introduces us is a certain Mr Crowe, Public Orator for nearly half a century, but whose eloquence does not seem to have produced him many leaves and fishes. He had a small living, in addition to his university office, but a large family, whose expectations were, of course, limited. 'But since God feedeth the ravens,' quoth this cheerful divine, 'so He will, I trust, the young Crowes.' For his own part, he was far from extravagant, especially in his apparel, and on one occasion, when dining at Magdalen, being asked by a friend why he appeared in his cassock as well as his gown, he made him this privileged communication: 'The fact is, my good sir, I have no cloth breeches in Oxford, so I put on these petticoats (which I keep here for St Mary's), to hide my own leathern shorts.' He was a frequent preacher in the university church, and 'although almost a republican' (Mr Cox seems to consider this as unnatural as though he had possessed two heads), 'he had the tact not to let this bias affect his public addresses—so as to offend the loyal mind of Oxford.' From his great practical knowledge of agricultural matters, he acted for New College as its Woodman, and in that character attended annually at the *marking* of their trees. This part of his calling seems to have given a colour to his harangues. 'I remember his preaching a sermon on the "Barren Fig-tree," when he strikingly reminded the New College part of his auditors of his office in their woods, by the emphatic manner in which he every now and then thundered out: "Cut it down, cut it down." He even carried his wit into the Oxford Theatre—the reverse of the proverb about taking coals to Newcastle—and conferred the honorary degree of D.C.L. upon a distinguished warrior, with this neat stroke of pleasantry. He had begun as usual: '*Insignissime Vice-cancellarie et vos egregii Procuratores, præsentò vobis virum hunc bellicosissimum*'—when, on looking round to take his hand, he found that the hero, attracted by something in his rear, had faced

to the right-about; the awkward incident was instantly and happily turned to rhetorical account—'*virum, aio, qui nunquam antea tergiversatus est.*' It is characteristic of this book and its theme, that this Mr Crowe, not having fine feathers (although by far the most original character mentioned), is spoken of in a patronising manner, and as though some apology were requisite for introducing him among such august company as the Dons. That President of Trinity seems to be more to our author's taste, of whom he writes, with respectful eulogy, that he was 'highly esteemed; and also played a steady second-violin part in a quartet.'

Mr Cox's regret at the advent of those irrelevant times when undergraduates began to abbreviate all academic phrases, is humorously genuine; when even 'Little Go'—the slang name for 'Responsions'—became too fatiguing, and was cut down to 'Smalls'; when *Magna Vacatio* became 'the Long,' and 'Moderations' were spoken of as 'Mods'; nay, when even the names of the colleges themselves ceased to be respected, and he heard with his own ears, the last boat on the river—that of St Edmund's Hall—urged on by one of its *alumni* in these words: 'Go it, Teddy—go it, Teddy!' Then, indeed, our author must have felt it time to wrap his gown around him, and retire from all outdoor spectacles.

The most curious part of the matter is, that where insubordination happens to chime in with established authority, our Oxford official has no word of reproof for it. When an effigy of Tom Paine, for instance, was burned at night on Carfax, we are told that the magistrate, in consideration of the *right feeling* thus roughly displayed, *wisely connived* at the tumultuous and somewhat riotous expression of it. It really seems as though the perpetual carrying of that gilt poker, which was his sign of office, had, as it were, polarised our good Bedel, so as to attract him towards the externals of authority, while turning his back upon what is really worth respect: it seemed strange to him, for instance, that the paraphernalia of the theatre, and the honours of a D.C.L. degree, should not have overwhelmed a man like Wordsworth, who, he tells us, 'stood firm, and apparently unmoved as one of his Westmoreland mountains.' Scarcely a dozen lines are devoted to this event, while whole chapters are taken up with the 'persecution' of Bishop Hampden and the vagaries of Mr Ward.

We are fortunately preserved from anecdotes of the chancellors of the university, from their being too exalted beings to be discussed by our author. 'I do not presume,' he says, 'to say much of our chancellors.' But he does venture to remark that Lord Grenville was the proudest-looking man he ever saw, and seemed cold and unbending even to 'great people.' How anybody—even a chancellor—could be otherwise than supple to 'great people,' evidently astonishes our Bedel, who, in his zeal to do honour to his superiors, has wronged the memory of the Great Duke himself by handing down this very mild joke of his to posterity. "Mr Vice-chancellor," said his Grace, one day, as we were waiting for a summons to her Majesty's presence, "sit down, sit down; the rule at court is to sit when you can—you're sure to have plenty of standing;" and he laughed heartily, as if he felt he had said a good thing. And so indeed, adds Mr Cox, 'he had.'

Upon the whole, the first part of this volume—

before our Bedel got so thoroughly polarised—is the best of it. In those early years, if there was less polish at the university, there was more originality. Its divines had not yet 'lost in form and gloss the picturesque of man and man,' although their sermons might not have been of first-rate quality. Instead of select preachers, the pulpit of St Mary's was then filled by what were very significantly called 'Oxford Hacks.' One of them boasted that he was the best paid minister in the Church of England, for he often got a guinea ahead; his preaching fee being four guineas, and his congregation (exclusive of officials) only three or four persons. Another of these preachers once edified a Long Vacation audience with a discourse on the character of Abraham, which he considered under three heads: First, as a patriarch; secondly, as the father of the Faithful; and thirdly, as a country gentleman.

In addition to his Bedelship, Mr Cox was University Coroner. Most of the sad cases in which his services were called in, have been, as may be supposed, in connection with the river; but the number of deaths by drowning at the university has been much exaggerated. In thirty years—from 1829 to 1859—there were only fifteen cases. There has, of course, been of late much more boating; but, on the other hand, 'more men can now swim, and more care is taken by them and for them, notwithstanding the really dangerous construction of their boats,' Mr Cox can remember not only when there were no boat-races at Oxford, but when boating, as a pursuit, did not exist. 'Men went down indeed to Nuneham, for occasional parties, in six-oared boats (eight-oared boats were then unknown): but those boats (such as would now be laughed at as "tubs") belonged to the boat-people; the crew was a mixed crew, got up for the day, and the dresses were anything but uniform. I belonged to a crew of five, who were, I think, the first distinguished by a peculiar (and what would now be thought a ridiculous) dress—namely, a green leather cap, with a jacket and trousers of nankeen!' The game of cricket was kept up only by Winchester and Eton men, and was confined to a single expensive and exclusive club. Not so very long ago, Oxford was entirely dependent on the canal for its supply of coal; and when the water was frozen, there was a daily advance in price, and then a total failure in the supply. The colleges got their fuel from the woods, which were more numerous in those days in the neighbourhood of the town; but the poor must have suffered terribly. On one 4th of March, we read, 'to the joy and comfort of the inhabitants, canal-boats arrived with a supply of coal, the navigation having been stopped by ice for *ten weeks*.' At another time, corn was so very dear, that the vice-chancellor and the Heads of Houses issued a notice that they had agreed to reduce the consumption of wheat in their families by one third, and recommended the same measure to their respective colleges; the quartern loaf of wheat being then sold at fifteenpence. In 1814, Oxford was so blockaded by the snow that no letters were received from London for four days.

During all social calamities, it is fair to say that Alma Mater shewed a liberal spirit, though the wisdom of free trade was late in dawning upon her. In 1798, no less than four thousand pounds was sent to government by the university and colleges, *in aid of the revenue of the country*; and the sum of

five hundred pounds was voted for three successive years by the city council for the same patriotic purpose. Perhaps the noblest contribution at this time came from the house of Peel & Co., at Manchester—namely, forty-five thousand pounds. The university at the same period formed its first Volunteer corps of five hundred, into which some of the more respectable college servants were also enrolled, 'and if actual hostilities had ensued, would have accompanied their masters to the battle, as the Helots did the Spartans.'

All this is curious and entertaining, and forms, as we have said, the more readable portion of Mr Cox's volume. His merely academic Recollections will be disappointing to those who have faith in 'Hawks-phut' (as dear Mrs Ramsbottom used to call it), as an active National power.

THE MONTH:

SCIENCE AND ARTS.

OUR learned and scientific societies are now in full activity: the Royal Society opened their session with interesting papers on the great total eclipse of August last, from which astronomers have gathered further facts regarding solar phenomena; also on spectroscopic observations of the sun, full of promise for those investigators who are trying to find out the sun's constitution; also, on the dredging operations in the North Atlantic, by Dr Carpenter and Dr Wyville Thomson, in which discoveries were made which throw light on geological history, and living representatives of very ancient fossils were found; also, a paper by Mr Graham, Master of the Mint, *On the Relation between Hydrogen and Palladium*, wherein he shews the formation of a metal, which he names hydrogenium—a simple fact, as it seems, but one pregnant with great results, and full of suggestiveness for metallurgists and chemists.—The Geographicals, deprived of a meeting-room by the pulling down of the west wing of Burlington House, are holding their meetings—one of them signalled by the presence of a deputation of Arab chiefs from Zanzibar—in the theatre of the Royal Institution.—The Civil Engineers have built a new meeting-room for themselves during the long vacation, a room in which they are not stifled, as in their former one, and where they are describing and discussing some of the grandest engineering operations in the world.—The managers of the Royal Institution have published their programme of lectures, and an interesting one it is. There are to be lectures by Dr Tyndall, Dr Odling, John Ruskin, Mr Westmacott, the Rev. F. W. Farrar, Dr Michael Foster, and others of skill and repute, so that many branches of science, art, and literature will be worthily set forth and elucidated during the session.

Artists and the sight-seeing public will be glad to know that the new picture-galleries of the Royal Academy, in the rear of Burlington House, begin to shew signs of completion. A grand range of galleries it is—light and lofty, with appropriate decorations and handsome fittings. There will be

room on the walls for three times as many pictures as can be shewn in the rooms at Trafalgar Square, and without hanging them inconveniently high or low.

For many years past, observations on the prevalent winds and weather have been made in all parts of the sea, and much information useful to mariners has thereby been gained. A large mass of these observations accumulated at the Admiralty is now turned to profit by the publication of large charts of the whole of the Atlantic Ocean, north and south, with indications of the prevalent winds and weather in every part thereof visited by ships. These indications are so clear, that a captain may look at his course before he starts, and see what kind of weather, what direction of wind, and what currents he is likely to meet with in every latitude. Of course he will choose such as will give him the speediest voyage, and in this way the dangers of the seas may be lessened, while commerce gains an advantage. The charts are five in number, four being for the wind and weather of the year, and one representing the currents. They are described as *Pilot Charts for the Atlantic Ocean*, and are to be followed by others containing the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. To meteorologists and other scientific inquirers, they would prove highly instructive; while to seamen, we should think, they must be indispensable.

Scarcity and famine again prevail in some parts of India, and such visitations may be expected until the whole country is properly irrigated. Water in itself is a more bountiful fertiliser than most persons would believe. Spain profits to this day by the water-ways and other irrigation-works built by the Moors; and wherever the French have sunk a well in the Sahara, there, in the wild desert, vegetation appears and flourishes. To quote an authority on this subject: 'It has been proved by actual demonstration that the whole of Sinde, the greater part of which is marked on some of our maps of India as the *Great Desert*, might be turned into a perfect garden merely by diverting some of the waters of the Indus, which now run away into the sea, and applying them to the parched-up land. Along the banks of the Suez Canal, fertility has in many places succeeded to a sterility of probably some thousands of years' existence.' However, we learn from recent dispatches that irrigation-works are actually begun over a wide extent of territory, that they will be on a scale of unusual magnitude, and that the authorities in India are ready to employ for this purpose any number of competent civil engineers. It will be interesting to watch the increase of vegetable products in India, as the water is led farther and farther over the surface. What effect will it have on the cotton crop, which, even under present circumstances, has increased to an almost incredible extent? In 1858, England imported from India 361,000 bales of cotton, worth £2,970,518. In 1866, the number of bales was 1,847,770, and their value more than £25,000,000 sterling. If a fair proportion of this large sum finds its way into

the growers' pockets, our Indian fellow-subjects should be waxing rich.

So much success attended the Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land, that a lively desire has been felt to extend it to other regions comprised in what is known as Sacred Geography. Many persons will be interested in the fact, that a party of Royal Engineers have been sent out under proper officers to make a survey of the Sinai Peninsula, of which at present there exists even no trustworthy map. The hill-country will be included with its rocky defiles and scorched valleys; and when all the materials are collected, models in relief will be made, similar to the plaster models of Jerusalem which excited so much attention when exhibited last season in London—and with them students will be able to study the topography of that country, and perhaps clear up disputed points. The ancient inscriptions carved on the rocks will be copied, photographs will be taken of prominent places, and collections made of the botany, geology, and natural history of (to use the Scriptural term) the Wilderness. The last mail brought news that the party had arrived at Suez, so that the survey is now actually begun.

Mr Hyde Clarke has read a paper to the United Service Institution on the Military Advantages of a Daily Mail-route to India. Railways already exist over great part of the distance. London to Vienna—to Varna, to Constantinople—thence to Bagdad and the Euphrates Valley, and along the coast to Kurrachee. At a speed of twenty-five miles an hour, the journey from London to Kurrachee might be accomplished in eight days, and to Bombay in ten days: one-fifth of the time required at present. It is easy to see that the advantages of such rapid communication would not be exclusively 'military.'

A method, apparently effectual, for the ventilation of mines by means of a fan has been tried in one of the coal-mines near Dudley. The fan, nearly seventeen feet in diameter, and driven by a steam-engine, is connected with the top of the upcast shaft by a funnel, and according to its rate of movement occasions a more or less rapid current of air throughout the whole of the mine. From thirty thousand to sixty thousand cubic feet of air can be drawn off in a minute, the place of which must of course be supplied by a corresponding rush of fresh air down the downcast shaft, whence it flows through every opening to the remotest workings. With such a fan as this whirling at the mouth of every mine, it would seem impossible that explosions should occur, for the fiery gas would be diluted and drawn off before it had time to explode.

That tremendous explosive material, nitroglycerine, is now rendered harmless by mixing it with powdered silica to about the consistence of ordinary clay. It can then be carried about, or subjected to blows or pressure, with safety, but is as efficacious as ever when required for blasting. To take an instance: A block of wrought-iron,

nearly a cubic foot square, having a hole through it of one inch diameter, was charged with six ounces of *dynamite*, as the mixture is called. There was no plugging; the dynamite was simply inserted in the hole, and was fired by a fuse. The block of iron was rent in two, and each portion blown to a considerable distance. Henceforth, tunnelling should be less tedious than at present, for dynamite has tenfold the blasting effect of gunpowder.

Dr Dupré, lecturer on chemistry at Westminster Hospital, states in a paper on Wine recently published that pure natural wine may be considered to have arrived at maturity at the end of from five to twelve years. In that time, he remarks, the slow chemical changes which bottled wine undergoes will have produced their best effect; and after that, 'the wine no longer improves by keeping, except to the taste of a few would-be connoisseurs.' But there are exceptions to this rule—namely, wines unusually rich in quality, and those which are 'fortified' by alcohol. Such wines continue to improve up to the end of fifteen years.

LAST WORDS.

CAN you not love me?—I hear, not in vain,
But it comes suddenly, crushing out pain
Just for a little while. Dear, let me speak—
No, not to pain you. Ah! think you I seek
Balm in your pain—in your pain for my own?
Joy I would give you, but grief bear alone—
Hide from you. What if my heart ache and smart?
Let it: What matter?—it is but my heart;
And if my heart is in any way dear
To me, it is that your image is here.
Thoughts of one least little pain that you bore
Through me, though sweet, would but make my pain
more.

Love seeks not self, dear; I seek only you;
You in your happiness—would have you true
Thus to your heart. Oh, be happy! for I
Live in your light, in your darkness would die!
Blame not yourself, who give nothing to me,
When I give all to you. Love is wind-free;
Blows where it lists, and hearts cannot be bought—
No, not by love; so the love I have sought
You cannot give me. No, no, do not grieve,
For you give greatly. Ah! see and believe
All I have dreamed, of pure, gentle, and high,
All fair, and sweet, you have shewn to my eye;

Made me believe the good, worship it too—
Love it, and follow it, following you!
Grieve not for me, for my wound will be healed
Some way I know not; some hope be revealed
Out of this loneliness, longing, some bliss
Issue, that never had been but for this!

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Contents:

	PAGE		PAGE
The Subpoena,	6	Stole Away,	19
The Night-Summons,	10	Adrift on an Ice-Floe,	22
Interest on Half-a-Crown,	15	The Evidence of a Jamaica	
The Great Sarah Jane,	18	Witness,	25

CHRISTMAS, 1868.

PRICE THREEPENCE.



Afloat on the Floe.

THE EXTRA-ORDINARY.

UPON a lofty hill, commanding (when the Tyrant Rain permits) one of the fairest prospects in England, stands the *Hotel Wordsworth* (Limited). Everybody knows it who knows the works of that philosophic poet, and many more who do not enjoy that privilege. Everybody knows it who knows and loves the Lake country, as well as all who know it and do not love that locality—a secret,

but by no means inconsiderable sect of persons; for (between ourselves) Paterfamilias cares little about the views, and thinks the hills from which they are obtained with toil and trouble, hateful; nor does Benedict, dragged to Lakeland at Love's chariot-wheels, in the silken fetters of the honeymoon, greatly admire it, but wonders (though she is sufficiently devoted to him, goodness knows) how

Angelina can be so spoony over scenery. But Paterfamilias and Benedicts are both to be found at the *Hotel Wordsworth* in great numbers, nevertheless, with Matresfamilias and Angelinas, or (to be classical) Angelinas, to correspond. Needs must when the Dev—, when the Devotion (I was about to say) for the Picturesque impels those who rule us. Still, though I entertain myself an exceeding reverence for the bard of Rydal, I pity these, his bewildered victims, who are sacrificed, as it were, to his *manes* throughout this sacred locality—the whole affair is to them so utterly inscrutable; and they have not the courage to ask what it all means. They know nothing of philosophic poetry, these good folks, and they don't want to know. Why should they? And yet it seems they ought to know. Materfamilias, who has got up all the poetical quotations that are to be found in the guide-books (for when *she* was Angelina, Wordsworth was not so fashionable), repeats them at the fitting localities to her astounded spouse. He had no idea that he had married, a quarter of a century ago, so accomplished a woman; that protracted experience of wedded life, however, forbids him to own it, or himself her inferior. He nods and murmurs: 'Just so,' 'Very true,' as though the lines had also occurred to himself, although he had not given them expression. Angelina quotes copiously, remorselessly, from the original volume. Benedict chucks stones into the lake, lights another cigar, laughs to himself, and, when it is all over, kisses her. He is hopeful that this sort of thing won't last for ever; that Angelina will settle down into a sensible woman, and abstain from the quotation of philosophic verse; which indeed comes to pass. But for the present, what does it matter?

To him it matters not one tittle;
If those bright lips had quoted Locke,
He would have thought they murmured Little.

She is sure, she says, her Charles loves poetry, and he corroborates her statement. He dotes upon it. 'Which poet do you love best, dearest?' inquires she. 'Byron.' 'And which poem?' He protests that he adores them all with equal favour; whereas the villain has only read *Don Juan*.

Upon the whole, the bard of Rydal is the innocent cause of more hypocrisy than any other English writer. To do him justice, he never contemplated the erection of the *Hotel Wordsworth*, which, besides affording 'excellent accommodation for families and others,' is a gigantic shrine devoted to his memory. Just as at the old *Castle inn* at Hastings, the Coffee-room is labelled *The Saxon*, and the Billiard-room (by a still more audacious anachronism), *The Norman*, or—to cite an instance more nearly parallel—just as the inns at Stratford-on-Avon have their *Macbeth* and *Othello* chambers (one of them has even a Washington Irving chair), so *The Wordsworth* borrows the names of its apartments from the titles of the poems of its patron saint. Thus, the vestibule is aptly enough entitled *The Prelude*. The Coffee-room—perhaps because it is an apartment so vast as to afford opportunities for travel upon the wet days, which are numerous in those parts—has inscribed over its door *The Excursion*. Over the Commercial Room, we read *Resolution and Independence*, not particularly appropriate, it may be said, yet supposed by its tenants, I daresay, to be rather a motto in compliment to their calling than the thing it is. Above the bowers devoted chiefly

to the Angelinas, such names as *The White Doe* and *The Pet Lamb* are fitly placed in illuminated scrolls. On the lintel of the Lavatory, we read, *The Waterfall and the Eglantine* (although the latter, so far as I know, is not within); and so on. The wags (who are not to be kept out of even Lakeland) of course make fun of these very creditable devices. They study the *title-page* (no more) of W. W.'s poems, and suggest names for the uninscribed apartments. They propose that over the front-door should appear *Uncertainty* (the title of one of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets, but with such men *nothing* is sacred), to typify the difficulty that is experienced during the brief Lake season in getting rooms; that *Monastic Voluptuousness* (also an Ec. Son.) should indicate the Billiard-room, because happiness is found there even away from Angelina; that *Rest and be Thankful* should be the badge of the bed-chambers over the kitchen, which are said to be more warm and noisy than is agreeable; and that *Animal Tranquillity* should adorn all the sleeping-apartments, to embolden those guests to whom 'a flea-bite' means something of consequence. It has been suggested further, that there be movable tablets to suit particular occasions; such as *We are Seven*, over a dormitory that may chance to be particularly crowded; or in case of the august presence of a nobleman in the hotel, *Laud*. When the signal is given that the *table-d'hôte* dinner is served, I have even heard one of these scoffers ejaculate: 'There goes *Peter Bell*.' This public entertainment, in contradistinction to 'the Ordinary' in the commercial room, is more generally termed the Extra-Ordinary.

It is, on the whole, a pleasant life which folks lead at *The Wordsworth* (Limited). Even those persons I have spoken of as not taking a very lively interest in external Nature and her Great Exponent, W. W., nevertheless enjoy themselves considerably. Paterfamilias derives much pleasure at second-hand from seeing his daughters made so happy by the contemplation of what he jokingly designates (for he loves his joke, be it ever so small a one) as Mere scenery; and Benedict is (or ought to be) always in the seventh heaven with his Angelina. In the morning, if it be fine, a long string of carriages, and a cavalcade of riding-horses, ponies, and even of donkeys, with panniers for the young (who are brought to Lakeland to imbibe, I suppose, the Picturesque—as Joey Ladle did his wine—through the pores of their skin), appear at the inn-door. There is the open 'brake,' with four horses, for the large family who have got that coveted sitting-room, with the balcony looking westward on the great network of Cumberland hills; there are three or four carriages and pairs; and there are any number of open 'cars' (so greatly affected by B. and A.), the occupants of which sit facing one another, but very close together, and who are compelled, by circumstances over which they have no control, to gaze into one another's eyes. The riding-horses are not in much request, because those who are young and slim enough to mount them, can also walk, and the district is admirably adapted for pedestrian exercise (as I am informed by those who use that mode of progression); but there is always quite a drove of ponies, strong and sure-footed, though sometimes so small that a tall man can combine on them the advantages of walking and riding. These animals are used for the mountain-expeditions by P. and M.

'The girls' generally go on foot, in order to have the opportunity of carrying an Alpenstock, a perfectly useless instrument, but a graceful addition to their mountain-costume—round hat and feather, gown looped up all the way round, shewing a charming bit of colour in the way of petticoat, and the sprucest Balmorals. 'Such thick boots we wear!' say they with triumph; and, it may be added: Such neat ankles! There is nothing pleasanter for a young gentleman, from the universities or elsewhere, and not as yet provided with his Angelina, than to be asked by P. or M. to join one of these climbing parties. He has managed, let us suppose, to introduce himself by some little act of civility; by pointing out the most desirable spot for a *coup d'œil*, when he met them near the Lake; or, still more likely, by the loan of an umbrella (young men who are fond of ladies' society in the Lake District should—like dear Robinson Crusoe—always travel with an umbrella, for this very purpose): the next morning, he may cough a little, within the observation of Materfamilias, and she will doubtless express a hope that he has received no hurt from his generous self-sacrifice on behalf of her delicate but imprudent Isabella. If he does not know how to play his cards *then*, he had better give up playing cards as an accomplishment he was not born for.

Ah, that first excursion with Isabella! Her beloved parents are necessarily left behind, because their steeds follow the zigzags, and we two take the face of the hill. She goes like the chamois, and (what a thought!) *chez moi*; we are soon alone, except for that 'off-and-on-companion' of our climb—that detestable Fred. Fred is her brother, 'a youth of some fourteen summers,' as the novelists would term him; in reality, a school-boy, bad in himself, and hateful to others; especially hateful to *you*. He appears at the most unexpected moments from behind a rock or a tuft of fern, like the robbers of Loch Katrine, just as you are taking his sister's dainty hand to help her over some tremendous and otherwise impassable chasm.

'Hollo, Bella, here's a lark; see me roll big stones down, and make the sheep run!' cries he; then, perceiving her tender embarrassment, he adds: 'Lor, how red you are, Bella! aint she, Mr Jones?'

You would like nothing so much as to roll Fred down the steep place to which he has directed your attention; but, on the contrary, you take an early opportunity of slipping half a sovereign into his hand to take to school with him. By that means you fancy you have secured, if not his friendship, at least his neutrality; his silence. Vain hope. That very evening, when the family are alone, that terrible Frederick will begin: 'I say, Bella, how precious red you looked!' &c.

Papa is most fortunately asleep, with his handkerchief over his face (he likes to doze decently, as Cæsar died); but mamma, though silent for the present, has something to say to Isabella, before she retires for the night, on the score of her constitutional imprudence. There is a great fuss about the education of boys; but in a country that assumes to be well governed, boys should be kept somewhere among themselves in Reformatories, quite out of the way of everybody else, until the period of adolescence. The very thought of them has blurred the delicious memory of that first ramble, or rather scramble, with Isabella. But now the mist clears, and the sunshine comes again. I see

her crossing the broad beck, swollen with recent showers, poising herself in butterfly fashion on stone after stone—a series of the most admirable classical attitudes—*poses plastiques*—for the benefit of but one beholder, myself. If her fairy feet would only slip, and give me the blessed chance of leaping headlong into that crystal pool (for I can swim), and dragging her to the surface! How sweet to run all the way down to the hotel together, as fast as we can go, the victims of a common misfortune, dripping! How delightful to have the excuse of calling at No. 1 Sitting-room (ah! what inscription, poet, can I borrow for *that* lintel!), to inquire after her on the morrow! But these are dreams. She don't tumble in at all, but arrives, radiant and palpitating, on the thymy bank, where I await her; secure, but also thirsty. Will she deign to use the drinking-cup which fits into my flask (albeit infinitely inferior to the hollowed alabaster of her hand), and perhaps mix a dash of sherry with the limpid draught? Refreshed and smiling, she starts once more to seek the mountain top, her cheeks aglow with health, her golden hair (the chignon has been wisely left at home) the sport of every breeze—The whole affair, in short (except for the sherry), is an Idyl. Perhaps Isabella has sisters; in which case you rove from flower to flower, like a bee, uncertain where to settle—that is, to marry and settle; and I think this state of blissful uncertainty is as agreeable as any save one—which is, of course, the married state.

Even more charming than roaming with Isabella over the hill-top, is spooning with Angelina in the vale; for 'Love is of the valley,' says the poet; meaning, doubtless, that you are not so exposed down there to public view. There is no Fred to come upon you at a *maldépropos* moment; if B. chance to press his lips to A.'s marble forehead—I state the case with studied coolness, borrowing the chastely classical (and mathematical) style of Euclid—it is only gentle Echo who repeats the circumstance, and even then in the strictest confidence. You are alone with Angelina, and Nature—who is better than any mortal 'gooseberry-picker,' and never *de trop*. The beauties of her glorious pictures are heightened by the presence of the Beloved Object. The very sunset has a new splendour seen through the rose-coloured glasses of a respectable attachment. Love, 'a more ideal artist he than all,' tints the very clouds. Yes; I quite agree with the sensible but susceptible Wedagen—we call him Bluebeard at the club—in his predilection for the Lake District, as the locality for a wedding-tour. 'Sir,' says he, 'I always spend my honeymoons at the Lakes;' and if so, I hope, for his sake, and that of his Angelina, past and to come—for he happens just now to be a widower—that he always marries in summer. I will not suppose it possible that his practice has hitherto been otherwise, and that the four previous Mrs Wedagens (I *know* of four) have been all cut off by the damp. It is very pleasant to hear the old gentleman discourse of them and their likings. I never knew a drysalter with so fine a vein of poetical sentiment. 'My poor Jane,' he once confided to me, 'always preferred Ullswater; when I was staying at Patterdale, with dear Lucy, last year—only last year, sir, and now she is gone!—I often thought of Jane. She was so fond of Airey Force—that's the waterfall, you know, in Gowbarrow Park. She had a great soul for scenery, had Jane

—especially for water. Now, my precious Betsy was always for Windermere; Winandermere, as she used to delight to call it, the very name, she said, "a linked sweetness long drawn out:" you should have known Betsy, sir, for you would have appreciated her. However, for my part, I was never happier than with my sainted Clementina at *The Wordsworth*. We had the sitting-room with the balcony. Ah, well! those days are all gone by. I know I have no right to complain, but I shall never meet with another woman like—like those four.

I often wonder whether Wedagen is a very soft-hearted, kindly creature, or one of the most diabolical murderers that have ever appeared in human form. However, his advice is well worth taking—and, indeed, whose experience ought to be more valuable!—as to the right place for a honeymoon; while the best hotel in his favoured District is beyond doubt *The Wordsworth* (Limited). The attention to visitors is so exceptionally great at this establishment, that it has given rise to the statement, that if any guest looks black under the eyes, the kind and watchful lady who presides over the domestic arrangements causes a suitable pill (silvered) to be placed upon his dressing-table, with a piece of candied lemon-peel to take after it. This delicate attention has not been paid to me (for I am never bilious), so that I cannot personally vouch for the fact; but the very existence of the legend testifies to the perfection of the arrangements at this hotel, in which I happen to have a few shares myself.

But even the sagacious manager of *The Wordsworth* and his admirable wife cannot assure fine weather. If it were decorous to quote any other bard than W. W. when speaking of such a subject, the motto that might be inscribed over the entrance to Lakeland should be from the works of W. S., late of Stratford-on-Avon:

The rain it raineth every day.

I can't help thinking that the hotel company might do something to stop it, with the help of Science. (No, not tarpaulins; I have already dismissed that idea from my own mind, because they would shut out the scenery.) That the thing might, however, be mitigated by the establishment of a lending Library of Fiction, is certain; whereas, there are only a few guide-books, and half-a-dozen copies of the works of its patron saint, for the whole house. The London Board (from which I have been hitherto excluded, by the most infamous cabal) is illiterate and vulgar, and refuses to supply the necessary novels, a list of which I have myself taken the trouble to compile. They say that the visitors go to study the Book of Nature, which is always open to them. But that is false: at the *Hotel Wordsworth* it is almost always shut. The rain comes down like a wall; or the mist rises up like the new patent shutters, and shuts up Nature's shop completely. 'The more opportunity for the exercise of the imagination,' replies the London Board in their cynical manner—of which, by the by, I shall take the liberty to speak a few words at the next general meeting. But then, Suppose one has no imagination. How much of it is to be found, in *The Excursion* itself? I assert that life is often a burden in that hotel to nine-tenths of

the guests. The tenth part are either newly married couples (and I have known even *them* give way), or men who are so careless of their moral responsibilities as to play at whist by daylight. *Monastic Voluptuousness* can only be secured for an hour, for there is only one table. In seasons of long-continued rain, a weird and hollow sound fills the vast edifice from dewy (and much worse than dewy) morn to dewy (ditto) night: it is the noise of people yawning.

Weary of their relatives' and friends' society, everybody then patronises the Extra-Ordinary for the mere sake of change. Otherwise, Paterfamilias and his party seldom condescend to dine in public, and the Benedicts and Angelinas never. But as in the great throes of Nature (Earthquake, Volcanic Eruption, and the like) the animal world congregates together, made sympathetic by the common peril, so in our Lake flood-times, when the downpour has continued long, the human creatures resident at the *Hotel Wordsworth*, no matter how exclusive by nature, or 'wrapt up in one another' by circumstances, are led, sooner or later, to leave their private sitting-rooms, and mingle with their kind at the sound of Peter Bell. Even the tenants of the Commercial Room are driven by stress of weather into the Coffee-room—for man cannot always be pricing goods against his fellows—and the Ordinary becomes (literally enough) a feeder of the Extra-Ordinary. At first, some of the new-comers are sufficiently reserved and shy; but in time, as the remorseless rain pours on and on, the whole company become on the best of terms with one another, like the Happy Family that used to astonish the Londoners in Trafalgar Square. The lord of many acres lies down with—or at least sits by the side of the bagman; the clergyman of the Church of England (provided that he, and not the other, is called on to say grace) endures the immediate neighbourhood of the dissenting minister; and the man of pleasure condescends to the man of business, and accepts his blunt invitation to take wine. Even the ladies forget the mutual animosities which animate them on other occasions, and forbear to express, even in their play of feature, the opinion which they in reality entertain of one another. They reserve their comments on 'what insufferable airs that Lady Spikanspan gives herself—whose father kept a public-house until his licence was refused by the magistrates, and it is more than probable "my lady" had something to do with that;' or on 'that little chit of a girl, who ought to be in the nursery, instead of being a married woman, if she is married (for, for their part, they would be surprised at nothing in a young person who dresses herself out in that manner); and what the men can see in her to admire—except, of course, poor Mr Benedict, who must, one would think, be stone blind—they cannot imagine.' These comments, I say, are reserved until they get up-stairs; and nothing can exceed their amiable behaviour to one another at the common table.

I remember a rainy season at *The Wordsworth* some years ago, which, in its violence and duration, exceeded all other rainy seasons. The house was full, and nobody could stir out of doors. The ground (which, to do it justice, dries with great rapidity when there is any sun to dry it) was reduced to the consistency of pulp or a quicksand; you could not walk in it, and you could not quite swim in it. There were no signs of holding up

(except with respect to umbrellas) anywhere; even the sanguine mountain guides, who waded up to the hotel every morning from habit, and not with the least expectation of being employed, confessed the wind was still in 'the rainy ever;' the rainy quarter being very appropriately so entitled in those parts. The barometer, though tapped a hundred times a day, stood obstinately dropical at Much Rain. The company at the *table-d'hôte* increased gradually from six-and-twenty to forty; it then included all the guests at the hotel, save those who had had a previous experience of the district, and had already fled southward in despair. We dined early, in the hope that the waters might suddenly abate, and leave us an afternoon dry, at least 'overhead;' we might as well have hoped for an afternoon wet overhead but dry under foot. We thus met so often together that we grew exceedingly sociable and friendly, as I daresay, under the like circumstances, did the animals in the Ark. Our most majestic pair was Sir Algernon and Lady Crawley. The baronet did not take the chair, because that would have involved some trouble, but sat very affably on the right of the Vice-president. Her Ladyship of course occupied the corresponding seat at the head of the table. These were our only titled folks, and we made the very most of them; it was not until many weeks afterwards, when I happened to meet the Vice, alone, on the summit of Scafell Pike, that he whispered to me confidentially that he had found Sir Algernon a little dull.

Our President was Mr Mark Lane, a well-known man in City circles, and of immense sagacity. He had been bankrupt three times, but was now said to be richer than ever; and he made no secret of either circumstance. He was accustomed to adapt the popular proverb, 'A shilling will neither make me nor break me,' to his own commercial position, by the substitution for 'a shilling' of the words 'fifty thousand pounds.' It may easily be imagined that we made a good deal of this gentleman also.

The social gulf between these magnates and the good-natured Bilkins, an emigrant from *Resolution* and *Independence*, and who, from being, I suppose, in the hardware line, was not at all afraid of putting his knife in his mouth, may be easier imagined than described; and yet, such was the levelling influence of the weather, that I have seen Lady Crawley smile at some of his observations (which, it must be owned, were not destitute of humour), and I believe Sir Algernon would have done the same, had he understood them.

A curious contrast to the facetious bagman was afforded by Mr Wunce Forral, a gentleman as queer to look at as his 'front name;' a solemn mysterious personage in deep mourning, and who was understood by the ladies (who have a native instinct for such facts) to be a confirmed widower. So far as could be discovered, he had no other profession; and he was never known to open his mouth except to admit food: he spoke, of course, but he was a Yankee, and spoke through his nose.

Messrs Noyce and Freeman were such inseparable companions, that it is impossible to treat of them except as a firm. They sat next to one another with the persistence of a newly married couple, and contributed to the general conversation about as much. Little was seen of them at *The Wordsworth*, except at the Extra-Ordinary, for even on fine days I am sorry to say they spent much of their time in the Billiard-room. The former had

no profession, and I fancy he was one of those persons upon whom fortune bestows a small competency and the faculty of doing nothing—three hundred a year and a contented spirit. Mr Freeman was understood to have been a naval surgeon; he was an odd brusque fellow, and when asked upon one occasion at the lake side whether he was fond of fishing, had answered: 'Yes; for whales;' which we all thought very rude.

We had two pair of Honeymooners: Captain and Mrs Broadwood—the latter of whom was evidently the commanding-officer, as indeed she ought to have been, whether promotion went by seniority or purchase; for it was certain she was the elder, and it was whispered that he had 'had money with her'—and Mr and Mrs Frederick Foy. Mr Foy was an Irishman, if my ear did not deceive me, and unless he was possessed by a morbid ambition to imitate the rich roll of Connaught; and his wife was a West Indian beauty; so very brunetish a brunette, and with such an extreme contempt for 'niggers,' that she was suspected of having a touch of the tar-brush in her veins.

Of the ladies, Mistress Jane Brown, as she entitled herself, was perhaps the most remarkable; though not, indeed, in respect of youth and beauty (for there were many younger and more charming of her sex, including two very pretty brides), but she had both originality and intelligence. It was surely 'original' in her to assume brevet rank at three-and-thirty, when she might have continued to call herself 'Miss' for the next ten years; nor was she old-looking for her years, nor at all ill-favoured. Unlike Mr Wunce Forral, she was outspoken and eloquent enough, making no secret of her enmity to Man, and of her contempt for his fancied superiority.

When it had rained uninterruptedly for a fortnight, and we males had grown intolerable to one another after the Extra-Ordinary, it was to Mistress Jane Brown that we applied, and made humble petition that the ladies would not withdraw from table, but continue to honour us with their presence for an hour or so after dinner. To which she replied, that, for her part, if she could have got but one woman to stand by her, she would never have left us at that season. 'Directly we depart,' said she indignantly, 'you gentlemen begin, I know, to use your wits; any talk does for women, and therefore you do not trouble yourselves to think before you speak to us; but when you are left alone, you are afraid of one another (for you are all cowards), and dare not discuss the weather, the last Sunday's sermon, the becomingness or unbecomingness of chignons, or the comparative merits of Titians and Lucca. You are obliged to be as sensible as you can—you know you are.'

It would have been a pity to undeceive her with respect to the intelligence she imputed to our after-dinner conversation, for the fact was it was intensely dull; and when Bilkins volunteered to sing what is called a comic song, matters became downright dismal. However, Mistress Jane Brown's honest indignation delighted us; and though I noticed the proposition did not altogether please the rest of the ladies (especially the brides, to whom, I suppose, their Benedicts' talk seemed always to be sensible and intelligent), they consented to our prayer; and my Lady Crawley would condescend to sit with us for an hour over the dessert before she gave that majestic nod which

dooms men for a while to their own society—to monasticism tempered by tobacco-smoke.

It was under these circumstances, and when the sources of ordinary conversation had been fairly dried up, that we at last took to telling stories. It began in this way. Mr Bilkins, whose fame as a vocalist had reached the ladies' ears, had declined one afternoon to favour them with a specimen of his talents in that way. 'I cannot sing the old songs now,' he had replied in a tone of pathos (such as a newly-made widow at the pianoforte might be supposed to use); and, indeed, it was quite as well that he refused, for some of them were just a little coarse.

Perhaps Mistress Jane Brown had her suspicions; for she turned on him severely, and observed: 'Since you won't sing, Mr Bilkins, perhaps you'll tell us a story.'

Mr Bilkins was great at Toasts (at divers times, he had proposed all our healths, in turn, each in a florid speech), and quite unequalled at 'Sentiments'—a peculiar species of oratorical entertainment, unknown out of the Commercial Room; but Narrative was out of his line, which, as I have already said, was hardware, and he bluntly confessed as much.

'That's rubbish,' observed Mistress Jane Brown contemptuously. 'You travel for a great house, you say, but you must surely have had some adventures on your own account. Were you never robbed? Did you never lose your way? Were you never—like the rest of your sex—benighted? Were you never murdered?'

'Well, no, ma'am,' answered Bilkins hesitatingly, for, notwithstanding his great animal spirits, he was rather afraid of Mistress Jane Brown; 'I was never murdered myself, but I have been subpoenaed in a murder case.'

'Let us hear about the subpoena, then,' said she. —'Hush! Silence, if you please, for Mr Bilkins's story.'

She was not a woman to whom it was easy for any man to say 'No,' except in *extremis*: in the case, for instance, of her asking you to marry her; then, perhaps, a man of great resolution might gather his energies together, make a mighty effort of the imagination, and reply: 'Alas, madam, I am married already.' As to denying her point-blank, I would defy him to do it.

Mr Bilkins began like a lamb.

THE SUBPŒNA.

'It was my own fault, and nobody else's, I confess'—began the commercial traveller.

'I have not a doubt of it,' interposed Mistress Jane Brown.

'At the same time, ma'am, I take leave to think that the punishment was excessive.—You may shake your head, but you probably don't know what it is to be cross-examined in a Court of Justice. There are folks with wigs, who, if they got you into a box, could even tackle you, ma'am: they'd twist you inside out; and,' added Mr Bilkins in a tone which proclaimed that the worm had turned, 'I should very much like to see 'em a-doin' on it.—The fact was, that Sarah Anne, although a good creature in many respects, was most unreasonably and diabolically jealous.'

'Your wife, sir, I conclude?' observed Mistress Brown.

'Yes, ma'am. If I have introduced her abruptly, I beg the company's pardon, being, as I have already stated, no story-teller. It was a saying of hers, that

she trusted a man just as far as she saw him; but not so much as round the corner of the street. If I had been a holy Roman, and she my Father Confessor, instead of my wedded wife, she could not have compelled me to give a more accurate account of my actions from the time I got into the 'bus that passed our door in the morning to the time I got out of the 'bus that passed our door at night. I did not travel at that time (except by the 'bus), but was a clerk in an office in the City. If I was asked out anywhere by an old friend in the evening, I had to get a dispensation from Sarah Anne, just as though she were the pope; and even then, it was thrown at me for weeks, "as though a man could not be happy at home with his own lawful wife, but must needs be gadding about with vicious bachelors." Some of my friends were bachelors, and of course they took compassion upon my unfortunate and down-trodden condition. You see me now, ladies and gentlemen, in excellent spirits, and no wonder, for they were kept in bottle, corked and wired, with Sarah Anne's own seal upon them, for three-and-twenty years. It was not for me to selfishly repine when so admirable a creature as the late Mrs Bilkins was taken to the reward of which she always spoke as being specially reserved for her. I was not worthy of her in any way; she ought to have married an angel; it would have been a great opportunity for him to exhibit his angelic virtues. She is gone, but While Memory holds her seat [here I recognised a Sentiment], 'I shall never forget her.'

Mr Bilkins expelled his breath in one great puff, just as the hippopotamus relieves his feelings at finding his head above water, and mopped his forehead with an immense yellow pocket-handkerchief.

'Sarah Anne was partly right when she hinted that my bachelor-friends were vicious: you must be right in some things, if you only make your assertions sweeping enough, and she was very exhaustive in that respect. One of my City acquaintances, Harry Wyatt (although I was only half-aware of the fact at that time), was a very dissipated person. Curiously enough, however, Wyatt was less annubbed by Mrs Bilkins than others whom I now and then asked leave to invite to our house: he had a very pleasant insinuating manner with women, and he used always to take Sarah Anne's part against myself in our little squabbles before company, although I well knew he was laughing at her in his sleeve, and wondering how I could be such a fool as to submit to her yoke. "Mr Wyatt," she was wont to observe, "whatever his faults, was a gentleman;" and you may be sure that when a woman says that of any man, she has been very considerably gammoned. My life was at that time like a piece of clockwork, and I confess that at times I felt it very tedious and monotonous. I hope I am a respectable man, but those dreadful tea-parties, which Mrs B. was always giving, and at which there was not a male creature except the Rev. Melchisedek Howler (and he was an old woman), were very wearing to my constitution. Tobacco was forbidden in our establishment as not only unhealthy but immoral. Melchisedek's idea of enjoyment (and he feared it bordered upon profligacy) was to infuse ginger in his tea. The usual commercial Holidays were of course spent in this peaceful and domestic fashion, and for my part, I could just as soon they had been working days; but when, on the occasion of the marriage of my employer, the clerks had a whole day given to them "to spend as they pleased," I was not so disobedient to his wishes as to pass it at home. I never told my wife about the matter at all, but resolved to enjoy myself after my own fashion. Tom Meyrick (who was much in the same boat as myself, but he had married a second time, and richly deserved it) had agreed to go down to Hampton and dine there early together, so as to get back home at the usual hour; and after spending a very pleasant day together

(with something else than gingered tea to comfort us), we returned to our respective wives, as if nothing had happened. The bus dropped me at my own door at 6.25 to the minute; but, what did not invariably happen, I found Mrs B. in high good-humour. Her party had carried the election of somebody who wished to get into the Asylum for Idiots (it was not Howler, I am sorry to say, although it ought to have been), against Mrs Jones's party, who had moved heaven and earth in vain to elect *their* protégé; and success over her rival made her quite pleasant. But she put me to confession, nevertheless. I had nothing particular to tell her, I said. Everything had gone on as usual.—This was wrong, ladies and gentlemen: I know that as well as you do; but then I knew Mrs Bilkins also, whereas you never have had that pleasure, or you would regard my conduct differently; you would indeed.—I had been to the office, I said (the examination being continued), and everything was satisfactory. I had come home as usual, as far as Waterloo Bridge, with Wyatt.

"Why did you not bring him home?" inquired Mrs Bilkins graciously. "You know I am always glad to see your old friends, and especially Mr Wyatt."

"This was news to me, and at any other time I should have been glad to hear it; but just then, it necessitated a supplemental falsehood: the lie had to be furnished with the circumstance. "He had friends with him," said I, "or perhaps I might have asked him."

"Not female friends?" inquired Sarah Anne suspiciously.

"No," said I; "men, of course: one was a tall man, with black whiskers and moustaches; the other was a short fair man."

"I knew that I should see Wyatt the next morning, and put him upon his guard against the next time he met Mrs Bilkins. I little thought what a rod I was preparing for my own back when I spoke these foolish words; but even then it struck me that I had committed an imprudence. I tied a knot in my handkerchief, before I went to bed that night, in order to be sure not to forget to tell Wyatt, that we might both be in the same tale.

"The next morning, when Tom Meyrick and I met at the office, we only exchanged winks; deeming it better not to speak of our little "outing" together before the other clerks, lest it should somehow reach the ears of our wives. I looked out anxiously for Wyatt, to get that little circumstantial incident of meeting him and his two imaginary friends, on the previous afternoon, safely off my mind; but he did not make his appearance. This was not an unprecedented occurrence after a holiday, for he could never take his pleasure, poor fellow, in moderation; but our manager looked very grave. "It is lucky for Mr Wyatt," said he, "that Mr Ingot is not at his desk." Mr Ingot was our employer, and something of a martinet in his views of duty. As it was, a cross was entered in the books against the truant's name.

"When I got home that evening, and found Sarah Anne as usual—with no successful Idiot to improve her frame of mind—I let her know that her pattern "gentleman," Mr Wyatt, had been out on the spree, and had not sufficiently recovered himself to appear in the City that day. The time was soon to come when I bitterly repented having said so.

"The next morning, Thursday, Wyatt being still absent from the office, and no explanation of his conduct having been received from him, our manager sent a messenger round to his lodgings with a peremptory note. The answer he brought back was from Wyatt's landlady, to say that her lodger had not been at home since mid-day on Tuesday. Until then, it had never struck us that anything was seriously amiss. We had joked about what had detained him; made observations not, perhaps, altogether charitable on his wayward habits; and

grumbled ill-naturedly because his absence entailed upon us extra work. But now all that was changed. We gazed at one another with grave looks, and Tom, who knew him better than I did, when appealed to by the manager, answered: "He was acquainted with some queer people, sir, his manner being so free and easy—and it is my opinion, sir, that we ought to give information to the police."

"Whatever had happened, we all now wished to find some excuse for the poor fellow, and all that day we were saying what a light-hearted, gay chap he was, and what excellent company; we all agreed (especially) that "he was as good-hearted a fellow, in the main, as ever breathed." That is what one says when we hear that any of our acquaintances, whose morals have not been quite what they should be, are dead, you know. From the first moment that his landlady's reply was received, something cold seemed to strike my heart, and I felt sure that we should never see Harry Wyatt again; never hear his merry talk, nor his pleasant cheery laughter. And we never did. There was nothing selfish in my regret at that time: but when I got home, and my wife began to put her questions about him, I said: "By the by, Sarah Anne, be sure you never breathe a word about my having met poor Wyatt last Tuesday afternoon."

"She turned very white, and replied submissively, "I promise you that, Horatio," and then never said another word. I have often wondered why she behaved thus. Perhaps the unaccustomed gravity and sternness of my manner frightened her; and the seriousness of having already babbled the thing to half-a-dozen of her tea-party friends, doubtless sat heavily upon her; but still, that does not account to me for her silence, although it may explain her so readily giving the required promise. I sometimes fancy that the poor woman entertained the idea that I might myself be in some way privy to Wyatt's death, and have placed myself, however innocently, within the grasp of the law. If so, her good and wifelike feeling towards me was the very cause of my future misfortune, since it caused her to discontinue the subject: otherwise, we should have doubtless come to an explanation there and then. But, as it was, I had too much pride to say: "I had a holiday on Tuesday, and was never near the office; I never set eyes on Wyatt all day, and when I told you I had seen him, it was only to throw dust in your eyes, because you have such a violent and jealous temper, as to make me downright afraid of you."

"Well, the next day, poor Wyatt's body was found in the Regent's Canal, with such marks of violence upon it as to shew that he had met with foul play; in short, there was not a doubt but that he had been murdered. By the afternoon, all the town was ringing with it (or so it seemed to me, who was in the thick of the rumours), and before I reached home, the news had even travelled down thither, although we lived in a distant suburb. At the inquest, the medical evidence proved that the crime must have been committed not later than Tuesday night. Thus, all the time we had been making fun of poor Harry, or inventing calumnies against him, he had been lying dead under water, with a weight tied to his feet, to keep him down. This was a sad thought to haunt one; but, besides, a more selfish terror had got possession of me. I knew that the police were searching for evidence as to who had seen him last alive. None of the clerks (of course including myself) had met him since the Monday, and we all said as much; but I trembled lest they should hear from other quarters that I had told a different story. I am a man, if not modest by nature, at all events with a great disinclination for publicity, and particularly that description of it that is associated with a witness-box; but at the same time I feared Sarah Anne with even a greater fear. If she once discovered that I

had hoodwinked her with respect to that holiday, there was nothing which she would not be ready to suspect me of; and suspicion with her was certainty, and certainty was sentence, and sentence was execution. She was the very Hanging Judge of private life, and I was resolved at all hazards not to come within her jurisdiction.

‘Still, as the day appointed for the trial drew near, I grew more and more anxious, although nothing had happened to give me new ground for fear: if the next week would only go by, the verdict would be given without my being dragged into the matter at all. But I knew well that the Crown was much in want of direct evidence, and that the conviction of the accused persons—for no less than two men and a woman were supposed to be concerned in the crime—depended at present mainly upon the evidence of Wyatt’s landlady, who had seen him leave her house with the two men. Now, suppose Sarah Anne should have related my story to her gossips before her promise was given, or even afterwards (for I know the temptation to which the sex is exposed in the matter of talking, and am far from being hard upon them, bless them! when they give way); and suppose her tea-table friends, in their turn, should spread the tale, until the ever-widening circle should reach official, or even officious ears, would not the Crown, in the person of some dapper little attorney’s clerk, come down as fast as a Hansom could drive to Acacia Terrace, Bellevue Road, and serve Horatio Bilkins with a subpoena? Why, of course, it would; and it did. The first day’s trial was actually over, and I had begun to congratulate myself upon my safety, when the very occurrence took place which my fears had so often pictured. The crown paid me a visit at no less an hour than 10.45 P.M., just as I was reading the account of the proceedings at the Central Criminal Court, with the utmost interest, in my shirt-sleeves and slippers. I was given to understand that the usual hundred pounds fine would be a very slight penalty compared to what I should suffer if I did not put in an appearance “before her Majesty’s judges and justices, at Justice Hall, in the Old Bailey,” next morning, “at nine of the clock in the forenoon precisely;” for there were reasons, known to the Crown, to make it suspect that I was wilfully bent upon interposing obstacles to the due course of the law. Was it possible it had heard of my miserable state of slavish subjection to Sarah Anne, and the consequences of my provoking her suspicions? No; for if so, the Crown (whose attribute is Mercy) would surely have been more pitiful. Even my wife was touched with the terrors that kept me awake throughout that livelong night; although, of course, she was ignorant of the cause, and attributed it to something very different.

“Horatio, my dear,” said she towards morning, in a voice broken by emotion, “if you have got anything on your poor mind with respect to the disposal of your property, let us send for Mr Pounce, the lawyer, the first thing in the morning.”

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committed for committing myself, would some day open its door and let me out; but No. 1 Acacia Terrace was my home for life; and the governor *there* was above all things to be propitiated: my first duty was clearly to No. 1. I daresay this all seems very clear and convincing, as I relate it now; but I was far from being satisfied by my own arguments, and when I entered the witness-box at the Old Bailey, I felt very much as if I ought to be in the dock. The red judge (or was it the Recorder upon the bench?), and the black barristers, and the blue policemen, whirled before me like the party-coloured figures in the toy called “the wheel of life.”

‘A voice from the bench told me to collect myself, and asked some question of the counsel for the prosecution as to my being a personal friend of the deceased.

“Oh! that’s it, is it?” said the Judge, in a terrible tone, in answer to the explanation given; and I felt from that moment that the mind of even that humane dignitary was poisoned against me. He was a man of acute intelligence, but he was a bachelor; otherwise, perhaps, he would have penetrated my secret, and sympathised with my unfortunate position: no bachelor is competent to be the judge of a married man. He no longer attributed my confusion to sentimental emotion. I was understood by everybody in court to be an unwilling witness, and certainly public opinion was never more correct.

‘It is too painful to me to go into details; let it suffice to say, it was with the utmost difficulty, and at extreme peril to myself—“If he don’t answer, I’ll commit him,” was a frequent remark that was launched at me—that I avoided any actual perjury; the very suspicion under which I laboured was of advantage to me in this respect, that it caused my examination to be conducted very wide of the mark. The counsel was always thinking I wished to shield the prisoners, whereas they were not in my mind at all; I was solely bent upon shielding myself—from Sarah Anne. The following is a brief extract from the conversation between Mr Stentor, Q.C., and myself, which lasted about four hours and a quarter, during the whole of which I was in a cold perspiration. I put my modest answers to his horrid questions in italics.

“You were a personal friend of the deceased, sir, were you not?”

“I was acquainted with him.”

“You were his fellow-clerk, I believe?”

“I was.”

“For upwards of ten years?”

“For more than ten years.”

“And during that time, independent of your business connection, you met constantly out of office-hours?”

“We met pretty often.”

“Oh! you met not constantly, but pretty often, did you?” [such a glance at the jury; and then twelve pair of eyes, besides spectacles, piercing me through and through, not to mention the burning-glasses of the judge on the bench!] “And you invited him to your house as well, I understand?”

“He came to No. 1 Acacia Terrace, once or twice?”

“His house, I suppose?” inquired the Judge of the counsel; as though he would not trust to me for any reply he could get elsewhere.

“Yes, my lord; the witness’s house”—the dwelling (he seemed to imply) which this unexampled scoundrel ventures to inhabit.

“And you went to his lodgings, in return, I suppose, Mr” (long pause, to be filled up by the jury with some such a name as Ananias) “Bilkins?”

“I sometimes went to his lodgings by invitation.”

“Now, observe,” remarked Stentor, Q.C., twitching back his sleeve, that he might make his arm more like a finger-post: “you were this man’s fellow-clerk, and intimate associate for more than ten years; you spent

your leisure in his company; you interchanged social visits at each other's dwellings; and now, I ask you, for the second time, were you, or were you not, his personal friend?"

"I was."

"Stentor looked round triumphantly, as though he would say: 'Well, I've got that out of him, at all events.' Then he began again. "You had heard of the murder, I suppose, before last night?"

"Yes."

"Five weeks ago?"

"No."

"Now, be careful, sir. Will you swear that you did not hear of this murder four weeks and five days ago?"

"I may have done so."

"You may have done so. Ah! it did not strike you, then, as being anything remarkable? However, since the doing justice to your personal friend, who had come by his death by foul means, was concerned, you doubtless lost no time in furnishing all the information of which you were possessed. You made some voluntary statements—not only to mere gossips over your gin and water? [How little this clever gentleman knew what he was talking about! I daresay he had never even tasted gingered-tea]; "but you applied to the police, and told them all you knew without fear or favour?—What! you did not? You waited for that subpoena you now hold in your hand, and which was delivered to you no earlier than— Come, when, sir? Let the jury hear the sound of your voice, sir, or they will think you dumb."

"Last night, at a quarter to eleven."

"And if you had not had that subpoena, you would have absented yourself altogether, rather than suffer the slight personal inconvenience" [you might have wrung me like a towel, and put me afterwards on "a home" to dry, I was so limp!] "of coming here to say a few words in the cause of your murdered friend? Answer me, sir—would you have come, or would you not have come?"

"I would not have come."

"At these words there ensued what is called "Sensation in the court;" and I saw somebody in the gallery sketching my features—probably for the Room of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's. But the moment at which I felt my hair beginning to turn gray was when Stentor bade me look at the three prisoners in the dock, and tell him whether I had ever seen any or all of them before. The two men were flashily dressed, but repulsive-looking fellows enough; the woman was young and handsome. I stared at them, and they stared back at me, and with much more confidence. The girl, especially, lifted her drooping head, and seemed to gather some comfort from perceiving that I was a stranger, for the fact was (as was eventually proved), they were all guilty, and had every cause for fear. There was such a silence as can scarcely be imagined: I could hear my heart beat, and the Judge dipping his pen in the inkstand to take down my reply, and the buzzing of a blue-fly in an upper window of the court.

"I have never seen one of them before," said I; "I am quite sure of that."

"You may stand down, sir," cried Stentor with profound contempt.

"But let him remain in the court," added the Judge in a terrible tone.

"Nothing came of this further; for the counsel for the defence was far too clever a fellow to cross-examine me—"the principal witness for the prosecution as to identity having signally failed to bring this horrible crime home to his unfortunate clients," &c. But I shall never forget that afternoon. Next to the three wretched criminals, there was no such miserable person as I under that roof. When they were convicted, and had received their sentence, I was not much less cast down than they, and infinitely more nervous. My time, as I fully expected, was then to

come. But either the opportunity for committing me for wilful and corrupt perjury did not turn up, or, what is quite as probable, the Judge forgot all about me; for he went away to his dinner, and left me free to go to mine—but with what degree of appetite, you who have heard the story of my Subpcena may easily imagine. It was what one may call a Trying Day."

"And did Sarah Anne ever discover," asked Mistress Jane Brown severely, "the deception you thought proper to practise upon her, and in the concealment of which you found it so difficult not to perjure yourself, Mr Bilkins?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered the commercial traveller, in a subdued voice. "I became the victim of treachery. Tom Meyrick, my confidant and familiar friend, was found out by his wife with respect to that holiday at Hampton; and in order to divert her wrath, told her my whole story: he sacrificed his friend to save himself, like the selfish mother who, pursued by wolves, cast out her own offspring to delay them—and I hope she was worried at last all the same, as most undoubtedly Tom was. Mrs Meyrick thought it her duty, "as one wedded wife towards another" (such were her very words), to disclose the matter to Sarah Anne. It is unnecessary, and would be most painful, to describe the consequences. To the Unmarried, they would be incredible, while the Married can easily imagine them. My story has been a sad one; but, like the public executions at the Old Bailey, it may indeed be called a moral lesson."

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"Would you please to tell it us?" inquired Mr Wunce Forral in his gloomiest manner, and with the twang that smacks of the United States as surely as the first note of Yankee Doodle.

"I will do so, if such is the general wish; but I warn you that the narrative is not calculated to raise your spirits. It is the record of an evil man, whose malignity did not even expire with his latest breath; who strove to reach a hurtful hand from the grave itself."

"We shall enjoy it exceedingly," said Mr Forral through his aquiline nose.

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"Some of you, perhaps, are saying to yourselves, "that in my case the grapes are sour," continued Mistress Brown slowly, "and you are quite welcome to that opinion. But the sad experience on which I found my views is not like that of Mr Bilkins, a personal one, although it came under my immediate observation."

"Would you please to tell it us?" inquired Mr Wunce Forral in his gloomiest manner, and with the twang that smacks of the United States as surely as the first note of Yankee Doodle.

"I will do so, if such is the general wish; but I warn you that the narrative is not calculated to raise your spirits. It is the record of an evil man, whose malignity did not even expire with his latest breath; who strove to reach a hurtful hand from the grave itself."

"We shall enjoy it exceedingly," said Mr Forral through his aquiline nose.

THE NIGHT-SUMMONS.

I NEVER could quite make up my mind to like Captain Standril. He was only Lieutenant Standril when he first came to Buckholme, and let my sister Alice see how deeply he was in love with her. He was very good-looking and very accomplished; and in the eyes of Alice and mamma, he was simply perfection. Any opposition that I, a raw school-girl of fifteen, might have felt inclined to offer to my sister's engagement, would have been worse than useless; it would only have sown discord where love the most complete had heretofore reigned, and would not have influenced Alice's after-fate in the least. So the wedding-day came and went, and took our dear one with it. Mamma and I were left in the old house alone; and Buckholme had never seemed so desolate to either of us as it did now that Alice's pleasant laugh was no longer heard in its rooms.

About six months after Lieutenant Standril's marriage, his regiment was ordered to Ireland; and then Alice would have been lost to us entirely but for the letters that passed to and fro between Buckholme and the little town where she was in quarters with her husband.

My sister had been gone about a couple of years, when that terrible affair of the bank-failure took place. Mamma lost two-thirds of her entire fortune in the crash, and my little portion went the same way.

As a consequence of this calamity, we were obliged to quit Buckholme, the spot where Alice and I had been born and brought up, and close to which was the churchyard where our father lay buried. Mamma could no longer afford to keep up so large an establishment. We were even obliged to leave dear old Scotland; and, to my girlish fancy, crossing the Border was like going into a foreign country. Mamma had a little house, her own property, in one of the northern counties of England, and that was to be our future home. After Buckholme, it was a mere cottage; and for several weeks after our arrival, we seemed to have scarcely breathing-room in it. But that feeling of narrowness and want of space quickly wore itself away, and we came to look upon the little house emphatically as home, and as such, we grew to love it. It was pleasantly situated on an upland sweep of rich pasture-land. From its windows, you looked across a wide expanse of undulating valley to the foremost spurs of a range of great hills that stretched northward—one giant pressing close on the shoulders of another almost to the Border itself—and formed no bad substitute for the more rugged grandeurs of my native land. Our tiny demeane was shut in on one side by the sluggish waters of a canal. This canal was a great eyecore to mamma, who always spoke of it as 'that ditch'; but for my part, I did not dislike it. The slow-trailing barges, laden with coal or merchandise, and the gay packet-boats that passed our windows twice a day—one up and one down—lent a touch of human interest to the landscape, and were of service to us in drawing our thoughts for a little while from ourselves and our immediate troubles.

Alice had been gone about three years. Of late, her letters had been very infrequent, and those that we did receive were confined to details of the meagrest kind. They breathed no syllable of complaint, yet there was always a troubled look in my mother's eyes for a day or two after she had received one of them. In the last letter sent us by Alice, there was no hint of what came to pass such a short time afterwards; consequently, our surprise was all the greater when, in the dusk of a certain summer evening, a fly stopped at our garden-wicket, and the next moment I clasped my sister to my heart.

It was only natural, after the first glad surprise

of the meeting was over, that both mamma and I should want to know how it happened that Alice had come back so unexpectedly, and without a single word of announcement. But my sister stopped us at the outset.

'Captain Standril's regiment is ordered to Canada,' she said, 'and he will accompany it. I decline going to Canada; consequently, I am come back home. I have nothing further to tell you; and if you love me, you will not ask me a single question more.'

And nothing further did she tell us. We were too happy to have her with us to question her against her will as to her reasons for returning.

During the six months that followed between the night of her return and the strange incident which I have now to record, Alice received but two letters from her husband. Whether the news they contained was good or bad, no one ever knew but herself. All she said was, that Captain Standril was quite well, and desired his regards to mamma and me; but she seemed even more melancholy after the receipt of them than she had been before, although not the faintest murmur or complaint of any kind escaped her lips. Both mamma and I were anxious on the score of her health, which seemed to wane with the waning year: the listless, brooding sadness that was upon her deepened from month to month, and the doctor's visits grew more frequent as Christmas drew near. But Alice's illness was of the heart, and all the tonics in the world would have availed her but little.

That winter was the hardest that had been known south of the Border for years; but I had been used to hard winters all my life. The black frost, which set in about the middle of December, promised before long to afford me an opportunity of indulging in my favourite pastime of skating, which, on leaving Buckholme, I had given up as a lost pleasure—as a something which I could hope but rarely to enjoy again. Every morning when I awoke, my first glance was to the window of my room, to see whether a filigree of frost-work still obscured the panes; and morning after morning, the dainty tracery was there again, telling me that the frost had not yet broken.

When the frost had lasted four days, I sent Simon, our solitary man-servant, who was coachman, butler, and gardener in one, to make a secret reconnaissance, and report privately to me as to the character and capabilities of its ice.

'It'll bear all right by to-morrow, Miss Theo, will t' ice,' was Simon's report.

Next morning, I imparted my project to mamma; but she would not listen to it till two days later, when my importunities induced her to yield a reluctant consent. I must go alone, or not go at all; but I did not mind that. I had spent many a solitary hour skating on the great loch near Buckholme, with no company but my own thoughts. So Simon went down with me to the edge of the canal, and put on my skates for me, and then I started. I had a glorious three hours on the ice; and got back home all aglow, just as the sun was dipping into the gray mists of the dying afternoon.

A week passed, and still the frost held without the slightest sign of a break. Every day I went on to the ice for a longer or shorter time; and mamma was quite as anxious now—being well assured that the ice could not give way—that I should enjoy this healthful exercise while I had an opportunity of doing so, as I was to second her wishes in the matter. Dear mamma! She was afraid that Alice's melancholy would infect my spirits if I staid too much indoors; that I should catch the trick of sadness, without having its warranty.

On the morning of Christmas-eve, there came a third letter from Canada, addressed to my sister. We were all sitting at breakfast when it was brought in, for, this morning, Alice seemed better than usual, and had come down quite unexpectedly. She opened the

letter with hands that trembled slightly. As her eyes took in the contents, a deep angry flush mounted to her white face. Next minute she arose, looking beautifully indignant, and crossing the floor, thrust her husband's letter between the bars of the grate, and did not turn away her gaze till it was burned to ashes. Then she crossed the room to leave it. She was going back to the solitude of her own little chamber up-stairs.

'Is Robert quite well, dear?' asked mamma anxiously as Alice's hand was on the door.

'Captain Standril is quite well,' she answered coldly, and next moment she was gone.

Later in the day, I went out on to the ice as usual, but the edge of my enjoyment was taken off by my sister's evident trouble. If only she would have made a confidant of mamma, and have told her everything, I felt convinced that half the sting would have been taken out of her trouble. But she nursed it in solitude, brooding over it in lonely misery, and, by her obstinate silence, making all three of us far more wretched than we need have been, had not her lips been sealed by mistaken pride.

I was met by mamma on entering the house. 'Alice is much worse this afternoon,' she said. 'The letter she received this morning seems to have given a shock to her nervous system which has utterly prostrated her. I would send for Dr Webb, but that she is so obstinately bent on not seeing him after his visit of yesterday; and when she sets her mind either for or against anything, you know how determined she can be.'

'Has she said anything to you respecting the contents of the letter?'

'Not a word.'

As the evening advanced, Alice seemed somewhat better, but still very silent and depressed; and altogether it was the most wretched Christmas-eve I had ever known. I was glad when bedtime came. After I had put out my light, I stood peering out of the window for a few moments. A slight snow-shower had fallen a few hours before, but the clouds had rolled themselves away by this time, and the wide landscape, white and solemn, lay bathed in clearest moonlight. What a pity it seemed, I thought, to waste in sleep hours that could claim so much beauty as their own.

I was fast enough asleep, however, when mamma came into my room, about two o'clock, and touched me on the shoulder. 'I want you to get up, dear,' she said. 'Alice is much worse, and I am becoming very anxious about her.'

Mamma's anxiety was at once shared by me when I entered my sister's room. That she was very dangerously ill was quite evident even to my inexperienced eyes. 'Dr Webb must be summoned at once,' said mamma; 'but whom can we send to fetch him?'

Dr Webb lived at Dale-end, a little town five miles away. So solitary was the position of our house, that he was the nearest practitioner. Under ordinary circumstances, there would have been no difficulty in summoning him. Old Simon would have got out Ball the pony, and have driven over to Dale-end with the basket-carriage, and have brought the doctor back with him. But to-night it so happened that neither Simon nor the pony was available. The former had gone to spend Christmas with some friends several miles away; and Ball, a few days previously, had fallen lame, and was for the present utterly useless. Beside mamma and myself, there remained in the house only two maid-servants, who would rather have forfeited their situations than have walked five miles along a lonely country road at that uncanny hour.

'I will go and summon Dr Webb,' I said in answer to mamma's question.

'But, Theo, you can never walk five miles at this time of the night.'

'I both can and will do it. Dr Webb will bring me back in his gig.'

'It will never do for you to go alone. Bessy the housemaid must accompany you.'

'She would only be an encumbrance, and I am not at all afraid. I should get along twice as well without her. You know my walking powers of old.'

'I must really insist, Theo, upon Bessy going with you. Otherwise, I shall go to Dale-end myself.'

I should probably have carried my point in the end, but just then a sudden thought struck me, which left me for the moment powerless to speak, and mamma at once went to call Bessy.

Five minutes later, Bessy and I were ready to start. Mamma let us out at the front-door, and bade us God-speed, and stood watching us till we shut the garden wicket behind us and were lost to view. Moon and stars were shining brightly, and all the country-side lay white before us. The snow was not thick enough to impede walking: it just served to deaden the noise of our footsteps on the hard ground. There was a keen frosty wind that smote us like a scourge when we got out of the sheltered lane, and turned our faces northward.

'Beg your pardon, Miss Theo, but you are taking the wrong turn,' said Bessy. 'We shall never get to Dale-end this way.'

'Yes, we shall, Bessy; or rather I shall. There will be no need for you to go.'

'But Mrs Saltoun said I was to go with you, Miss Theo; and, anyhow, this is not the road.'

'Let me enlighten you: I am going to skate there along the canal.'

'Law! miss, you will never be so foolish!' exclaimed Bessy, utterly aghast at the idea. 'Whatever will your mamma say?'

'Mamma has had to forgive me many worse things than that. I shall reach Dale-end in half the time it would take me to go by road, and Dr Webb will be able to see my sister so much the sooner. I want you to go down to the canal with me, and assist me on with my skates. After that, you can go back home, and tell mamma what I have done.'

Bessy grumbled, but was obliged to give way. I sat down on a large stone by the canal side, and she assisted me to fasten on my skates. My dress was well looped up, so as not to impede my movements; my hands were protected by a tiny muff; last of all, Bessy tied a handkerchief over my hat, and under my chin. Then I started. Good-hearted Bessy stood on the bank, and waved me a tearful farewell, as though I were going on a voyage of a thousand miles.

The ice was in splendid condition. The keen wind that had sprung up since midnight had swept the powdered snow off its surface almost as well as a broom could have done. To find myself on the ice by night was to remind me of old happy hours in Scotland, when we used to go out, a great party of us, with torches and bagpipes, and skate on Buckholme Loch. I nerved myself to the occasion, and determined to do the distance at racing speed. It was six miles, a mile further than by road. When the black span of the first bridge was touched and past, and Bessy left a quarter of a mile behind, the overpowering solitude of the scene began to weigh upon my heart. But the condition of my sister was of itself enough to make me feel sad and anxious. It could not surely be that we were going to lose her? And yet there was something in her appearance to-night that excited my worst fears. In my own mind, I could not help connecting my sister's increased illness with the letter from her husband which she had received that morning while at breakfast. If that hateful Captain Standril had never come to Buckholme, Alice would not have left us, and all the after-misery of her life resulting from her marriage with that man would have been spared her.

Such was the precise nature of the thought in my

mind, at the moment that a faint sound struck on my ear, and caused me to turn my head. I was disagreeably startled to find that I was not quite so entirely alone on the ice as I had imagined myself to be. There was some one behind me: a man. 'Some belated skater, no doubt,' said I to myself, 'who has been detained by good cheer and good company, and is now making the best of his way home.'

Without feeling exactly frightened, I was yet rather anxious and timid, and at once put on my speed to the utmost, with the view of distancing the stranger behind me. But I quickly perceived that the attempt was a futile one. My pursuer—for such, although I had no reason whatever for so doing, I could not help calling him in my own mind—was rapidly lessening the distance between us. The ring of his skates was plain enough now to my ear, above the noise made by my own. Suddenly, I decided to slacken my speed, so as to let this troublesome individual shoot ahead of me, since that seemed the only way to get rid of him. It was not without a quickened beating of the heart that I put this plan into operation, and reduced my speed by one-third. The stranger now came up 'hand over hand.' 'He will reach me at the bridge,' said I to myself, calculating the distance with my eye. So it was. As we shot under the bridge, he was skating in my shadow; as we shot out on the other side, he and I were abreast. I kept my eyes fixed straight before me, and skated on, but still at a reduced speed. I was momentarily expecting to see the stranger glide on in front of me, leaving me to pursue my journey alone. But he did nothing of the kind. We had left the bridge three hundred yards behind, and he was still skating in an exact line with me. My indignation was rapidly overcoming my timidity. 'A piece of unwarrantable impertinence, to intrude his company on me in this way!' I said to myself. With that I turned to fix him with a haughty stare; perhaps to question him, and saw—whom?

'Captain Standril!' My first feeling was one of utter surprise at finding by my side a person whom I had at that moment believed to be some thousands of miles away. But this feeling quickly merged itself, and was lost in one that was far more unpleasant—in one of sheer horror. In the first moment of my surprise at seeing Captain Standril, I pronounced his name, and was about to add some simple question, but a second glance at him caused the words to die away in my throat. As well as I could make out, he was dressed entirely in furs. On his head, he wore a close-fitting cap, made of the skin of some animal, from which his pale sharp-cut features and shapely moustache stood out clear and distinct in the moonlight. Yes, his face was very pale. It was more than pale; it was white—a dull death-like green white in the light of the moon—the face of a corpse! My soul itself seemed to shudder with a dread ineffable, as the conviction forced itself upon my mind that I was in the company of a dead man. He was looking straight before him at the moment I pronounced his name, and he took no apparent notice of my ejaculation. We were still gliding swiftly forward on our shoes of steel—I almost mechanically; we were still in a line one with the other, with a space of five or six feet between us: we had progressed about half a mile from the spot where Captain Standril had come up with me, when he slowly turned his head, and bent his eyes full upon mine—terrible eyes, with nothing of earthly speculation left in them, but in its place a nameless indescribable something, lighting them up with a strange inward light of their own, so that their expression was as clear to me as if I had seen them by the broad light of day. The horror that was upon me deepened till it was almost unbearable. Earth and sky, moonlight and starlight, and the shining icy floor which my feet were devouring so swiftly, all passed out of my cognizance as unconsciously as a dream fades out of the brain at

the moment of waking. We seemed to be skating, my dread companion and I, over a sea of glass towards a precipice that could be discerned dimly in the distance, and over which, having no power to stop ourselves, we must inevitably go headlong to destruction.

As in dreams we have no real knowledge of the duration of time, so, in the state in which I then was, I seemed to have passed hours in skating over the sea of glass, whereas it could only have been half a minute at the most before I came back to a recognition of time and place, and the real circumstances around me; and felt rather than saw, with a throb of unspeakable relief, that my companion's baleful eyes were no longer fixed upon me. In the mere fact of his presence, there was something sufficiently terrible; but had he kept his eyes on me much longer, I must either have died or gone mad.

There was something appalling in my companion's utter silence. I became possessed by an almost irresistible desire to challenge him, to question him, to do anything that would cause him to speak; and yet in my secret heart I was intensely thankful that he did not speak: it was a contradiction that I am unable to explain. Had he spoken to me, I should never have summoned up courage to answer again. Nothing, indeed, save the strong consciousness working within me that the errand on which I was bound must be accomplished at every risk, gave me the strength needful to accomplish my purpose. Had I been supported by a sense of any duty less stern and exacting, that support would have been in vain; I should infallibly have broken down; I should have shrieked aloud for help, though no one could have heard me; I should have turned and fled by the way I had come; or else I should have fallen senseless on the ice, and have been found next morning, frozen and dead. As it was, I drew my breath hard, and set my teeth, and murmured to myself: 'Not twenty Captain Standrils, dead or alive, shall stop me from going where I want to go!'

I increased my pace, and Captain Standril increased his. Onward we sped along a winding course that followed every bend and twist of the little valley, the white meadows, solitary and far-reaching, sweeping down on either side of our icy road without a sign of human life or habitation. The little town for which I was bound lay in a fold of the valley, and could not be seen from the canal till you were close upon it. My heart began to beat more freely at the thought that now the end of my journey was not very far away. About a mile before you reach the town, the canal divides itself into two branches, which, after forming a loop (for purposes of trade), come together again in the large basin at the terminus. Each of these channels would have answered my purpose equally well, there being little or no difference in their length; but I had made up my own mind to take that which led to the right. When we were about a dozen yards from the point of division, the dark and speechless figure by my side shot suddenly ahead in the direction of the left-hand channel. I now saw, what I had not noticed before, that my weird companion was shadowless! The noise made by his skates cutting the ice could be distinctly heard above that made by mine; in bulk and figure he seemed as other men; his person intercepted the light, and was apparently as palpable to the touch as my own: yet despite all this, as he shot forward in the brilliant moonlight, not the slightest shadow was cast by his figure on the ice. I saw, and thrilled from head to foot as I saw. At the entrance to the left-hand channel, my companion paused in his career, turned his head slowly, and beckoned to me to follow him. As though impelled by some fatal fascination from the course I had determined on in my own mind, my feet, without any apparent volition of my own, turned off to the left, as if in obedience to my ghostly

summons. Another instant, and I should have been close on his track, when suddenly I heard my sister's voice, as clear and distinct as ever I heard it in my life, say close to my ear: 'Follow him not!' With a half-smothered shriek, I swept swiftly round, and next moment I was racing at a headlong speed down the channel to the right.

I thought I had got rid of my ghostly pursuer. My eyes went stealthily round, and could see no signs of him. But a couple of minutes later, as I emerged from the shadow of a bridge, he was by my side again. But every minute now my nerves were gaining in steadiness, for the end of my journey was nigh. Presently, we shot into the great basin of the canal, the roofs of Dale-end were before me, and my heart gave utterance to a brief silent thanksgiving for my safe arrival. I sat down on the wharf steps to take off my skates. My dread companion had vanished; I was alone.

As I hurried up the narrow tortuous streets of the little town, I seemed to be conscious of a vague shadowy presence haunting my footsteps; but whenever I turned my head there was nothing to be seen. This impalpable something followed me close up to the doctor's door, but was gone utterly the moment I laid my hand on the bell. The good doctor was quickly down in answer to my summons. 'O Dr Webb—my sister!' was all I could say, and then I fell insensible at his feet.

When I recovered my senses, I found Mrs Webb by my side, whom her husband had fetched out of her bed to attend to me. There, too, was the doctor himself, ready prepared for the journey.

'You had better stay here for the rest of the night, my dear Miss Saltoun,' said the doctor, 'or else I may have two patients on my hands instead of one.'

'I am quite well now; and I must get back home,' I replied; nor could all the well-meant efforts of the kind-hearted couple persuade me to the contrary. Five minutes later, well wrapped up in some extra shawls and rugs, I was seated beside the doctor in his gig, on my way home. As we were going along, I narrated to Dr Webb the details of my strange journey on the ice. He answered me, as I quite expected he would do—that my nervous system was out of order; that the delicate mechanism of the brain was slightly disarranged; that my mind had been dwelling too much on Captain Standril and the letter written by him; and that when the mental health was affected in a certain way, nothing was more simple than to mistake a spectral illusion for a creature of flesh and blood. Finally, it was Dr Webb's opinion that what I wanted most was tone; and he would write me out a prescription in the morning which would put all ghostly fancies to flight for the future.

'What you say may be quite correct,' I replied; 'nevertheless, I am as perfectly convinced that Captain Standril is dead, and that he died within a few hours of the present time, as I am that I am sitting here and speaking with you. All I ask of you is, that

you will put down the exact day and hour in your pocket-book, and leave the event to prove whether I am right or wrong.'

'Agreed,' he said. 'There can be no harm in my doing that. You will not, I presume, say a word either to Mrs Saltoun or your sister respecting what you have just told me?'

'Certainly not. It will be time enough for them to know when the news shall come.'

'The news never will come, my dear Miss Saltoun, take my word for it.'

We found my sister no worse than when I had left home. Dr Webb staid with us till breakfast-time. Before taking his leave, he shewed me the memorandum which he had made in his pocket-book.

A fortnight later, came the news of Captain Standril's death. He had been out skating on Christmas-eve with a party of friends on one of the smaller of the Canadian lakes. After some time, he had left the ordinary track of the rest of the party for a solitary run up the lake; and when about a mile and a

half away from any assistance, he had unwittingly skated into a large air-hole, which had been made by some Indians in the ice for fishing purposes. His body was recovered; but not till life was extinct. In the suddenness and terrible nature of this calamity, everything was forgiven and forgotten by his widow, except the one fact, that he had been her husband, and that once on a time he had loved her very devotedly. By one loving heart, Captain Standril was long and sincerely mourned.

After a time, and from other sources, some particulars of my sister's married life reached us. That it had been a very unhappy one, marked by gambling and dissipation on the one hand, and by patient endurance on the other, is all that need be said here. But there are some things a woman cannot forgive, and Captain Standril did that which would not allow of his wife accompanying

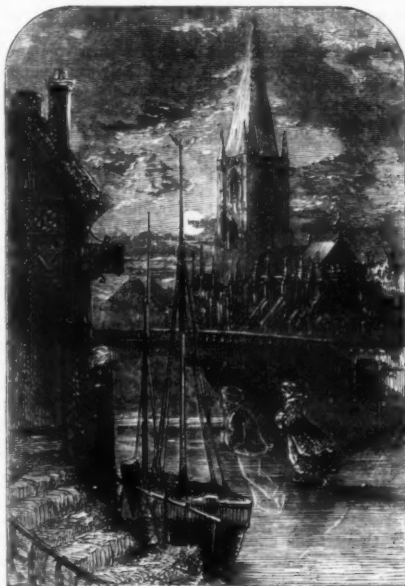
him abroad. The letter received by Alice on the morning of Christmas-eve contained a request that she would try to persuade mamma—poor as the latter now was—to sell out five hundred pounds' worth of stock, and remit him the proceeds.

I have nothing further to add, except that I was afterwards informed that at the time of my journey to Dr Webb's, the ice of the left-hand channel of the canal was broken under one of the bridges. Had I taken that channel, as summoned to do by my ghostly conductor, I should, in all human probability, have met a fate similar to that of Captain Standril.

Dr Webb is, however, still sceptical, and always speaks of the affair as 'a very remarkable case of spectral illusion.'

'A very likely story,' ejaculated the commercial traveller contemptuously at the conclusion of this narrative.

'A very good one, sir,' observed the stately baronet reprovingly.



'Good, if true, eh, Sir Algernon?' continued the unabashed Bilkins; 'and especially calculated to raise one's spirits after a fortnight of wet weather. —You come from the United States, Mr Forral, if I am not mistaken. What would your spry and intelligent citizens say to a story of a ghost on skates?'

'As to that, sir, I aint no idear,' responded Mr Wunce Forral. 'But in our country, the word of any lady would pass without comment, although she were the derndest, biggest, onremittentest liar from New York to Charleston. Yes, sir, I'll be dodrotted ef it would not.'

The consternation among the company at the terms in which Mr Forral's chivalrous defence was couched was such, that, for the future, I omit his characteristic language. Even Mr Bilkins was a little scared, and perhaps the more so because the American citizen had here produced one of those large cedar-pencils, procurable at Keswick only, and commenced to whittle it with a spring-back knife about ten inches in the blade.

'But surely, Mr Forral,' inquired the bagman in a somewhat subdued tone, 'you do not yourself believe in ghosts?'

'Yes, sir, I du,' was the unexpected rejoinder. 'I carry in my pocket a convincing proof of the fact of their existence.'

I expected him to produce a revolver upon the spot, and was quite prepared to give in my adhesion to any views he might please to express; but he only pulled out of his pocket a photograph case.

'My wife is deceased,' said he, in slow and thoughtful tones; 'but she is not lost to me on that account. I see as much of her as ever I did; I see her neow.' His eyes were apparently fixed upon some object, either at the window or between him and it; they had a grave and tender expression in them, and he had ceased to whittle. 'Yes, sir, I see Serena.'

'He is looking, unless he squints,' whispered the bagman in my unwilling ear, 'at Mistress Jane Brown.'

'Yes, sir, she is there—as plump as a pigeon and smooth as a persimmon, although she is but a shade.'

His manner quite awed us, though his expressions were so queer. We seemed to hear each particular drop of rain as it beat against the Coffee-room windows.

'I hope she is not out of doors, sir,' observed Sir Algernon with anxiety, after which unusual expression of interest, he grew indistinct, though he was understood to mutter something about a waterproof and an umbrella.

'She is in this room—an angel in linsey-woolsey,' continued the Yankee; and he kissed his hand at nothing particular, and nodded encouragingly in the same direction.

'Can we not see her also?' inquired Lady Crawley.

'Certainly, madam: there she is,' said the American politely, at the same time handing the photograph case to her Ladyship. 'That picture is what you call "as like as life," but one which you should rather term in this instance as like as life departed. Though Serena has left me in the flesh these fourteen years, it was taken the very last time that the sun came out at Keswick—not three weeks ago, madam.'

The photograph case was handed round. It

contained two figures—the portrait of Mr Wunce Forral, seated, and that of a lady some twenty years his junior, standing by his side. The latter was somewhat hazy and indistinct, but the features were quite recognisable; they were regular and pleasing, and an expression of great content seemed to pervade them.

I ventured to remark upon this last satisfactory circumstance.

'Yes, sir,' assented the Yankee; 'she takes an interest in my portrait, does Serena. She is always present when I am photoed; and since it seems to please her, I often sit. She has never yet omitted to "come out" upon the plate, in the manner there depicted.'

'Bless my heart!' ejaculated Sir Algernon; 'but does it not astonish the photographer?'

'It scares him some,' answered the Yankee coolly.

'Does he make the customary half-charge for the second figure?' inquired Mr Mark Lane.

'In this case he did not, sir, nor do photographers in this country generally; but, if raised in the States, their astonishment has never blinded them to pecuniary considerations. We air a practical people.'

Here ensued a pause, during which the company looked at one another, some with awe, and some with amusement of a mitigated sort, for the American gentleman was whittling (cutting the cedar, not partaking of the dessert) as before.

'Mr Forral's story is at least as singular a one as mine was, Mr Bilkins,' observed Mistress Jane Brown, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes; 'yet you seem to have nothing to say against his credibility.'

'I am not afraid of him, madam, if you mean that,' answered the commercial traveller with spirit, 'nor of any man alive.'

'And yet you are looking rather white.'

'I daresay I am, madam. It is enough to make any widower white to think that his Sarah Anne should be able to come back again from— from wherever she is.'

Here Captain Broadwood, who had hitherto confined himself to twirling his moustaches, and answering the expressive glances of his wife, interposed as follows: 'Mr Bilkins has been so severe,' said he, 'upon wives, and Mistress Jane Brown upon husbands, that my wife here long since suggested to me that I ought to say a few words in favour of the married state. I waited, however, in hopes that its cause would be pleaded by one better qualified, by experience, such as Mr Wunce Forral, than myself; but I cannot say his story has been quite satisfactory. I cast no reflection upon its probability, although I am quite as little afraid of him and his cheeseknife (which I recommend him to shut up and put away) as Mr Bilkins can be; but I don't think it would be an additional attraction to matrimony if deceased ladies were in the habit of frequenting photographic studios in the manner we have heard described. If a widower wished to marry again, for instance'—here I verily believe Mrs Broadwood gave him a sharp pinch under the table, for he added with sudden alacrity—'and a greater compliment to the married state it is impossible to pay—it would be extremely awkward if he could not send his photograph to the second object of his affections without its including the portrait of the first. In many cases, indeed, there would be quite a group of them. All, therefore,

that has hitherto been narrated has had a bearing inimical to matrimony. Being so newly married, perhaps my testimony in its favour may not be very valuable, but it may at least be permitted to me to balance, so to speak, the one-sidedness of what we have heard, by a simple tale of courtship, and its difficulties, which is certainly authentic, inasmuch as it happened to an intimate friend and brother officer of my own. Since the romance of true love is out of fashion, and in deference to Mr Mark Lane, I will call it, if you please,

THE INTEREST UPON HALF-A-CROWN.

"The summer sun was shining its brightest, the west wind was breathing its softest, the birds were piping their sweetest, and Jessamine Villa was looking its best. It was but a modest eight-roomed one-storied residence, yet few people could have passed it without a tendency to break, or at least crack, the tenth commandment. The broad veranda which ran round it was covered with the plant from which the house was named; the garden in which it stood was large, and very prettily laid out; and the situation could not have been nicer if selected by a committee of landscape-painters. From the front, the eyes could wander over a broad expanse of Devonshire scenery, catching two distinct glimpses of the sea between the softly swelling hills. At the back, the French windows opened on to a lawn not large enough to be dreary, or destitute of shade from the surrounding trees; yet not so small as to cause a sense of confinement.

"This ideal lawn was as level and smooth as a billiard-table, and no flower-bed broke its surface. Of course it was a croquet-ground.

"The game was going on now, two on each side, which perhaps makes the best match, so far as a test of skill goes. Florence Mowbray and her brother Bob were set against Sarah Mowbray and Captain Turville. A pug who chased the party-coloured balls, under the impression that they were set rolling for his express amusement, might be reckoned a neutral, as he was not more mischievous to one side than the other.

"Florence was nineteen, blond, fragile, and engaged to Turville. Bob was sixteen, home for the holidays, and a respecter of nothing but physical force. Sarah was twenty, brunette, "fine," staid, and rather plain. Turville was moderately good-looking, well set up, and engaged to Florence, who had just croqueted him.

"Good shot, Flo!" cried Bob, who was excited. "Don't take him with you; send him to bla—into the middle of next week. He is a dangerous beggar that captain, and we can't drive him too far.—Hollo!"

"Instead of sending the ball of her adversary and lover to the other end of the lawn, Florence Mowbray dropped her mallet, and retired rapidly along a path which led behind the shrubbery, with her handkerchief to her eyes, and sobbing audibly. Turville hurried after her.

"What on earth is Flo blubbing about?" continued Bob, turning to his remaining sister.

"Nothing," replied Sarah. "She will be better directly."

"Nothing" is nonsense, Aunt Sally; "nothing" is a banger."

"How can you be so vulgar and coarse, Bob?"

"Bangers are worse than slang. I know being spoony makes girls very stupid, but it does not make them cry for nothing; especially one like Flo. Is it anything I said? Come!"

"Well," said Sarah, "Arthur did bring news that he would have to go abroad this morning, and perhaps your saying that he could not be sent too far did set

her off. When any one is just ready to cry, it takes very little for that."

"I am sorry to hear about all this," said Bob. "I thought Arthur and Flo were going to get married quite soon, and then if his regiment went anywhere, she could go too, because there is no fighting going on."

"Ah," said Sarah, "but it seems Arthur has met with a great misfortune. He has lost all his money, and is in debt, and cannot purchase his step, and has to exchange into a West India regiment, where promotion without purchase is quick, because the officers die so; and the marriage has to be put off for years, perhaps for ever."

"Sarah Mowbray's summary is rather too concise.

"Arthur Turville, who lost his parents while a child, was brought up, educated, and placed in the army by a beneficent bachelor cousin in business at Liverpool, who likewise purchased his steps, made him a modest allowance, and left him a good round sum when he died, which was six months previous to the time when this story opens.

"The young man mourned his benefactor sincerely enough, but he could not help feeling consoled by the consideration that he was now in a position to make Florence Mowbray an offer which he was pretty certain she would accept—as she did.

"It took some time to wind up the deceased merchant's affairs, but that was satisfactorily accomplished at last, and the executors forwarded to Turville the sum to which he was entitled.

"Turville, who knew nothing of business, and had never kept a balance at a banker's, was rather puzzled at the first to know what to do with his money when he got it; so he turned to his only legal acquaintance, Jack Lomax.

"You have little difficulty, I should say, in picturing to yourself the style of solicitor who, when close upon fifty years of age, was still called "Jack" in a garrison-town. A full-blooded, jolly, rosy mortal, with a cheery voice and a ringing laugh; a judge of cookery; fond of a bottle, fonder of two; a straight rider, a good shot, a sure hand at a winning hazard, singing a good song, and certain to be found at one regimental mess or another on every guest-night.

"Yet he was not considered a bad man of business either; on the contrary, he was employed as agent by the most influential county people, including a nobleman who was the largest landowner in the neighbourhood, and the collection of whose rents, &c. was of itself a handsome income for the popular lawyer.

"Turville did not find him in his office when he called; but, on returning to the barracks, he met him just outside the town, riding homewards, and stopped him with the information that he was the very man he was looking for.

"What is it?" asked Jack Lomax, reining up his hack.

"I have had some money left me, and want to invest it; but I do not for the life of me know how to set about it."

"What sort of investment?"

"I have no idea. Anything which gives a good percentage, and is quite safe."

"Reasonable man! Asking me to square the commercial circle for him!—Stick to the three per cents., my boy, and then, if you want to raise money to purchase your step at any time, you will be able to set out without trouble or loss."

"I have no objection to consols," replied Turville; "but what on earth am I to do to get my money into them?"

"Well," said Jack, "I do believe that soldiers and parsons are the most unsophisticated—Write to your man of business."

"I have no man of business. Can't you do it for me?"

"Certainly I can. Call at my place any time to-morrow morning, and give me particulars."

"Cannot you take the money now? It is not a large bundle for twenty thousand pounds; I asked them to let the notes be big."

"Good gracious, man! you never mean to say that you have been going about with twenty thousand pounds in your pocket! Why did you not leave it in the banker's hands till you had made arrangements for investment, and then pay it over by cheque?—Well, well; how am I to take it from you here? I cannot give you a receipt."

"To-morrow will do for that," urged Turville. "I shall not be easy till I get rid of the money."

"A quarter to four," said Lomax, looking at his watch. "There will be time to pay it in to the bank.—Well, give me the notes, and call to-morrow morning."

Captain Turville returned to his quarters with a light heart. Jack Lomax rode to the bank, paid the money in to his account, went to a Board, dressed for dinner, had rather a convivial evening, returned home, and died of apoplexy that night.

It was altogether one of the most improbable pieces of bad luck that ever befell any one, was this event which ruined Turville. There were no witnesses to his having handed the money over to Lomax; he had no receipt to shew: no way of proving his claim whatever. His brother-officers could not believe in the possibility of his eventually losing the money, and were loud in their expressions of indignation; the colonel said he might have all the leave he liked, that he might give himself up entirely to the prosecution of inquiries. So he went up to London, and had a personal interview with Messrs Round and Hand, the solicitors who had the management of the late Mr Lomax's affairs. Those gentlemen expressed great sympathy with Turville, and owned that it was a cruel case; but what could they do? Mr Lomax had not left nearly so much property as had been expected; and the heir-at-law was not at all inclined to pay over twenty thousand pounds of it without clear proof that he ought to do so.

"If you could produce a receipt, or even a memorandum in Mr Lomax's handwriting," they said.

"I cannot do that," replied Turville; "but I can prove that I received the money on such a date in notes of such and such a value; and that Mr Lomax paid them in to his account on the afternoon preceding his death."

"Ay," said the lawyers; "but you cannot shew to the satisfaction of the heir-at-law that you had not received some value for the money. Young men borrow through their lawyers occasionally; there are such things as post-obits."

Turville's position was aggravated by the fact that, as his allowance had ceased when he came into the property, he had contracted some few debts, not to any large amount, indeed, but sufficient to harass him under the present unfortunate circumstances. It was this, in fact, that determined him to exchange into a West India regiment, a course which was attractive to his present desperate state of mind; and as he was a man of prompt action, he at once entered into negotiation upon the subject.

When all hope of recovering his property seemed at an end, he summoned courage to go and tell Florence how rudely their daydream of happiness was dispersed. The poor girl had a good cry, composed herself, played croquet even, and then broke down again, as we have seen.

The game was not resumed; and after a melancholy afternoon, and a dinner at which everybody tried to force an appearance of cheerfulness, and failed, Turville took leave, and started across the fields for the railway station, which was about two miles off.

It was a lovely walk, lit up by a glorious sunset, but the beauties of nature had rather a depressing influence upon his spirits. A thunder-storm would have done him good; even drizzling rain or fog would

have accorded better with the state of his mind as he strode on, brooding over the past, and speculating upon the future.

"It will soon be over," he thought. "A fellow with such frightful bad luck as I have will soon die of the yellow fever; that is one comfort. Poor Flo will cry a little at first, but she will soon forget me, I suppose. Well, it can't be helped; so there is no good in bothering. I'll have a pipe."

"Have you got a bit of 'bacca to spare a poor fellow?" said a voice at his elbow, and turning round, he saw a disreputable-looking fellow-creature dressed in old clothes that were too big for him, boots turned up at the toes, and a cloth cap with a peak. His hair was cut very close, his hands were white and delicate, and his eyes were restless.

Unselfish people often seem to get hustled aside in the scramble of life, but they have one great advantage over the egotistical: the power of taking interest in the fortunes of others saves them from brooding too much over their own calamities. Turville was a remarkably unselfish man, and it was not in the power of fate to harden his heart or sour his temper.

"Here you are," he said, taking a good pinch out of his pouch.

"Thank you, sir. You can't tell what a stay a pipe of 'bacca is to an empty stomach; it takes the gnaw out of it.—You have not got a job of gardening for me, have you, sir?"

"Gardening! No; I do not live about here."

"Well, I ask pardon; but if so be you could recommend me to any one who could give me a bit of work, it would be a real good deed, it would. I don't wish to be a tramp, I don't; I want to earn my living honest; and it's very hard when a cove as only asks to be allowed to work shouldn't be able to get a job; aint it now, sir? It makes a cove feel desperate."

"It is hard," said Turville. "I am a stranger here, but there seem to be plenty of villas about, with gardens to them. You should apply at the houses."

"I have, sir; I have been right round—been walking since five o'clock this morning, I have, trying. Some of them had their own gardeners, and wouldn't hear a word; a few of 'em hesitated, but when they took a second look at me, they ordered me off."

"Well," said Turville, throwing a keen glance over his companion, "you do not look like a gardener, certainly."

"That's it—that's it," said the man, as to himself, in a tone of desponding bitterness which would have affected even a professional philanthropist. "One would say I had got 'thief' written on my forehead."

"If that man is acting," thought Turville, "he would be worth ten guineas a week to any manager.—No, no; I do not mean that," he said aloud; "but your hands do not look as if you had been used to hard work, and your dress is not that of a working-man."

"And I have got the county crop," said the vagrant, passing his hand over the back of his head. "Well, sir, I daresay it's hard for a gentleman to understand chaps like me. I have been on the cross, and that's true. I was bred up to it: my mother taught me to prig. Think of that, sir—a mother! But I never half liked it; I always envied them as was on the square, and I did try, and try again, to be honest. But the police was hard on me, and my old pals was hard on me, and masters was hard on me; and when the workmen employed on the same job got the idea that I had not been all right, they was hardest on me of all. And so I gave in at last, and got lagged; but while I was in prison, I took an oath I would never steal again—never. And I'll stick to it, though I am drove to make a hole in the water."

"What is your age?" asked Captain Turville, eyeing his man all over.

"Twenty-one, or thereabouts, as near as I can judge."

"Why don't you enlist?"

"List, sir! Why, I've heard"—

"Never mind what you have heard; a pack of lies, no doubt. I have been in the army myself for many years, and I know what I am talking about when I say that a soldier who determines to behave well has a better chance in life than any other man of his class. The discipline only presses heavily on those who resist it; the duties are only severe for those who try to shirk. If you have been humbugging me, indeed, and do not hate your old life so utterly as you say, you are not fit for a soldier, and would be miserable enough; but if you have given a true account of yourself and your feelings, and are sure that your good intentions will last, you will never repent the day you took the shilling. But here is the station, and my train will be up presently. If you take my advice, go to the dépôt written down here, and use my name. Stay; I will sign it."

"Turville drew a smart pocket-book of Russian leather with his monogram blazoned upon it in gold from his breast coat-pocket, and writing upon one of the blank leaves, tore it out and handed it, with half a crown, to the man."

"Half a dollar!" exclaimed he in surprise, for sixpence was the largest sum to which his hopes had risen. "God bless you, sir, for that, and more for not taking for granted I lied. If there was more of you in the world, there would be fewer of me. I'll take your advice, sir."

"An approaching whistle was heard, and Turville hurried into the station just as the train was drawing up to the platform. "Pity to tear a leaf out of poor Flo's present," he said to himself when the train was in motion, taking out the pocket-book and eyeing the mutilated page somewhat ruefully; and then he pressed it against his moustache—doubtless to smell the Russian leather. And so he returned to his quarters, rather easier in his mind from having done something to help a fellow-creature out of the mire, but very melancholy and unsettled."

"In a few days he received a letter from the London agent with whom he had been negotiating, to intimate that he had settled the preliminaries for an exchange into a West India regiment, and only waited for his reply to conclude the matter."

"Turville opened his desk, and sat down with a sigh to pen the words which would separate him, in all probability, for ever from the girl he had looked upon almost as already his wife, when he was disturbed by a knock at the door."

"A sergeant came in and saluted. "Thomas Jones wishes to speak with you, sir."

"Eh? There is a William Jones and an Alfred Jones in my company, but not a Thomas."

"No, sir; recruit from —, sir. Says he has got leave to come over and see you about something important."

"Tell him to come in."

"Quick march!" And in walked a being who had not yet acquired the art of padding his red jacket; whose regimental trousers had not yet been fitted to him; whose ammunition boots refused at present to shine; upon whose belt the pipelay stuck in peeling cakes. "Halt!" said the sergeant. "Salute proper, as I shewed you," he added in an under-tone; and then, at a sign from the captain, he left the room."

"So you have taken my advice," said Turville, recognising the companion of his walk from Jessamine Villa."

"Yes, sir. I got something to eat and drink, and a night's lodging, and next morning I set off towards —. I got there on Thursday evening, thanks to your half-dollar, sir, without having to go out of my way to the Union. But the night I reached —, I fell in with an old pal, and that is what I wanted to speak to you about, sir."

"Well? He had been a thief, I suppose?"

"Is still, sir; and not knowing that I was on the square, he got talking; and not wishing to brag, like, or seem to be ashamed of him, for he did me a good turn once, I let him talk.—Well, sir, I'll cut it as short as I can. He had cracked a crib, it seems, at P— some weeks ago. It was a lawyer's house, and he had found out that the window of a sitting-room looking out at the back had a broken fastening. So at night he got over into the garden, and waited. The lawyer was late; and when he came in, he sat some time in the room the other wanted to enter. At last the light disappeared, and after giving him an hour or more to get to bed and asleep, the thief went to the window, threw it up without any difficulty, and got in. He found a little loose cash in a drawer, and a pocket-book—that was all; so he determined to try another room or two. But on the stairs, just outside one of the bedrooms, he came on the body of a man lying all of a heap. He thought at first he was drunk, and was going to search his pockets, when he found he was dead."

"Good heaven!" cried Turville. "Just like poor Lomax!"

"Lomax; yes, sir, that was the lawyer's name. Well, it gave the thief such a fright, he bolted clean away through the window, which he closed behind him, and off, with only a trifle of money and the pocket-book. Well, sir, there were some papers in the pocket-book, which he thought some might give money for, but he was afeard to try on making use of them. And as I was more of a scholar than he, he shewed them to me for my 'pinion, saying we'd go halves if I could get anything by them, as lawyers' letters, he had heard tell, were worth six-and-eight-pence a line. I was just going to tell him I was on the square now, and could not join him, when I caught sight of your name, sir, which it caused me for to bismillate. I daresay it's of no use, sir, but here is the paper."

"And Thomas Jones handed to the captain half a sheet of note-paper, on which was written:

'Received from Captain Arthur Turville the sum of L.20,000 for investment. John Lomax. [Stamp—Date.]

"The pocket-book contained several papers not referring to Turville or his business; but entered in the diary amongst other memoranda for the day following, which never broke for the writer, was this:

'Mem.—To write to Messrs Shair in re the investment of Captain T.'s money. Qu. L. & N.-W. debents.'

"There are supreme moments when the concentration of feeling is so great that we can hardly tell whether pain or pleasure is predominant. The man who is recovered from drowning suffers acutely, though it is life that is fighting its way back through his veins. It falls to the lot of few to hear a jury foreman say "Not guilty," after a closely contested trial, in which they are the most interested parties; but the majority of us have experienced some revulsion of feeling so violent as to paralyse, for we have all been young, and many have loved: those are fortunate, indeed, who have never watched for the doctor's exit from the sick-chamber with aching suspense: reverses of fortune are by no means rare in this speculative age. The chances are, then, that you can understand how the blood seemed to rush from Turville's heart and lungs to his brain, remain suspended for a moment, and then course back again with a force and velocity which nearly suffocated him. But one thought never quite left him—he was not alone, and all display of emotion must be repressed. He kept his eyes fixed on the papers before him, until he could trust himself to speak with firmness, and then said: "Yes; I think they are of very great importance, and you have acted well and wisely. If these papers are what they seem to be, the man from whom you got them shall be rewarded. As for yourself, that is a very different matter—I shall not lose sight of you, depend upon it."

'Left alone, Captain Turville once more took up his pen to reply to his agent; but the letter contained directions just the contrary to those he had originally sat down to send, for he told him not to do anything which would commit him to an exchange, as circumstances had occurred which would probably induce him to remain in his present regiment.

'Then he commenced a letter to Florence; but, on consideration, tore it up. Perhaps there was something wrong or informal about this receipt, and he might raise her hopes only to see them dashed down again. It was better to wait until he was quite certain that all was right. It seemed so incredibly wrong that he should have been kept out of his own money at all, that he felt no security in the laws of his country whatever; indeed, he had a lurking uncomfortable suspicion that all civil enactments were designed for the protection of rogues against the honest and straightforward.

'The more he reflected upon the matter, the more restless he grew to have his fate decided one way or the other; and he determined to travel up to London with his strangely found documents at once.

'The colonel readily gave him leave, and recommended him not to go again in person to Messrs Round and Hand, but to tell his story to a respectable solicitor, whose address he gave him.

'Turville went up to town by the night-train, and called on the colonel's lawyer the first thing in the following morning. That gentleman, on hearing the case, and examining the receipt and pocket-book, assured him that he might be perfectly at ease; there was not the slightest chance of his losing a penny. He was perfectly dumbfounded at his not having made a legal fight for it even without these important documents, considering his chance to have been a good one.

"But if I had failed, I should have been in debt for legal expenses all my life, should I not? And even now, will my twenty thousand pounds more than cover the bill for getting it?"

'The lawyer laughed out. "You have got a good idea of us!" said he. "But you may make your mind perfectly happy; there will be no occasion for going to law. This money will be handed over at once."

'And so it was; and Turville wrote word to Florence Mowbray, that if she had not made any fresh arrangements, he was in a position to carry out the old ones; that fate, after involving them in a few distressing evolutions, had given them the word "As you were!"

'Thomas Jones (that is the ex-tramp's *nom de guerre*) is not exactly as he was, for he is a corporal in Turville's company. No one but his captain knows his antecedents, and none would guess them, for he is marked as a good man. Nor are the young people you have been so kind as to take an interest in quite "as they were," for they are honeymooning, which is a very abnormal and evanescent phase of existence.'

'Captain Turville got very good interest for his half-crown,' said Mr Mark Lane with an approving nod, as he leaned back in his arm-chair, with his thumbs in the arm-holes of his white waistcoat, the very personification of speculative and successful Commerce—'better interest than even the Great Sarah Jane was ever known to pay.'

'And what *does* she pay, sir? and who is the Great Sarah Jane?' inquired Sir Algernon with some stiffness, for although he had a noble desire for information—and an immense scope for the gratification of it, being ignorant of most things except horses and the law of trespass—yet he was not going to succumb, like the rest of the company, to mere Mammon in a white waistcoat—a

fellow who probably had not an acre of land he could call his own.

'Sarah is a tin mine, Sir Algernon, down in Cornwall; and one so valuable, that I have sometimes thought the word "tin" has come to represent the most precious metal, from her exceeding richness. I would rather have one share in my Sarah Jane than ten in the most productive gold mine in the universe.'

'She must be a very great improvement upon my Sarah Anne,' observed Mr Bilkins reflectively.

Mr Mark Lane, who dealt in scrip and share, had always professed ignorance (even at our table of Equality) of the existence of Mr Horatio Bilkins, who dealt in hardware, and he was not going to acknowledge it now.

'I am no story-teller, Sir Algernon,' continued the great man, studiously addressing himself to the baronet, 'but I know the history of that magnificent underground property in question, and perhaps it may be worth your attention.'

'Sir, I thank you. I am not one of those who affect to undervalue the importance of commercial enterprise, and I should like to hear it, of all things.'

To see Sir Algernon Crawley's stately bow to Mr Mark Lane, and Mr Mark Lane's acknowledgment of that courtesy, was a sight to make the heart glow.

THE GREAT SARAH JANE.

'My great-uncle David,' began the City magnate ['Bless my soul,' ejaculated the baronet parenthetically, and under his breath—'the idea of his ever having had such a thing!'], 'was the first person to rediscover Sarah Jane. I say rediscover, because the Romans knew of her, and without doubt she had been very profitable, even in their time, and with their rude appliances for working. David, who was himself a Cornishman, had been down the disused mine, and seen the ore; and he had an uncommonly sharp eye for what he saw, had my great-uncle; he had also a most excellent habit of never telling anybody what he observed when it was really worth knowing. Nobody, therefore, was informed until the proper time arrived, that he had paid this visit, except the Earl of Cornwall's steward, to whom he mentioned that he should like to rent the mine, if it could be obtained on a very long lease, and at a nominal rental, for that he had an idea there was coal somewhere about the place; as for tin, the word was not even mentioned, it having been supposed for centuries that the Sarah Jane's supply of that commodity was worked out. The steward replied, that my great-uncle David and himself, it was true, had always been on the best of terms; but that even for him, he could not perform an impossibility, such as persuading my Lord Cornwall to benefit himself by the sacrifice of a whim. It had long been his whim that no furnaces, factories, tall chimneys, or any other visible sign of commerce, should mar his fair acres; and as for permitting a mine to be worked within a mile and a half of his noble mansion, the idea could not be entertained for a moment.

'But when he dies?' persisted my great-uncle, who was at that time about eighty-five, though he afterwards lived to be quite an old man for even that part of the country.

'When his Lordship dies, if you make the application in the proper form, David, you shall have the mine.'

'It is not my business, nor indeed does it lie in my power, to tell you what the steward meant by "the proper form;" but the mine did somehow come into

the possession of our family upon the demise of the old lord—not that Uncle David lived to see it, for he died before his Lordship (who indeed was his junior by a quarter of a century).

‘But upon his deathbed, he beckoned his son Anthony to his side, and whispered these pregnant words: “When old Lord Cornwall dies, Tony, go to the steward, and speak him fair, and offer a hundred a year for a long lease of the old Roman mine under Tregarva’s Crag. It’s the best legacy I have to leave you. And let Dick” [that was my father] “have a dozen shares if he will, but no more, because I don’t like him. You may also employ him for what law business there may be to do, for why pay a rogue not in the family. The Mine, Tony, the Mine—don’t go near the place, lest you should excite suspicion—but take my word for it—the word of a dying man—and call it the Sarah Jane, after your poor mother.”’

‘So the very morning after Lord Cornwall died, Uncle Tony applied to the steward in proper form, and (the new lord’s whims taking some other direction than those of his ancestor) obtained in a few weeks the lease of the mine under Tregarva’s Crag; and with that in his pocket, he came up to London to consult my father as to raising the necessary funds to work it. For Tony was far from rich; and, indeed, to look at him in his humble dress, and to listen to his provincial talk, you would think he was a very small potato. Our own concern, at that time—my father was one of a firm of attorneys which not very long afterwards failed for a disgracefully small sum, in five figures—was quite a one-horse firm, but still we could afford to look down upon the Cornish branch of the family; and of course we did so. I well remember poor Tony’s coming late in the afternoon, just as my father was about to start by the coach—for there were no omnibuses in those days—to his little villa near Clapham, and with what difficulty he was persuaded to listen to that story about the dished tin mine. He had so little confidence in it, that he afterwards refused to take shares in payment of his account, instead of cash, although he accepted the twelve shares allotted to him in accordance with my great-uncle’s wish. Very shortly after he received them, my father died, leaving his affairs in a very embarrassed condition. I had, in fact, to compound with his creditors, who, while they laid hands on everything else I possessed, returned me in the most generous manner, and in acknowledgment, as they were pleased to say, of my frank dealing, the twelve shares in the Sarah Jane, because they set no higher value on them than my poor father, and the liability of the shareholders was unlimited. It is not often that tin mines turn up trumps, but each of those one-pound shares became worth one thousand pounds; and if you will look in the *Times* when it comes in this afternoon, you will find them at about that figure now. The mine was so rich, that of the eight hundred pounds raised to commence the works, only four hundred was ever required, and not a single call had to be made.’

‘Then, I suppose, your uncle Tony became an enormously rich man?’ observed Sir Algernon.

‘He became worth about half a million or so,’ returned Mr Mark Lane carelessly; ‘but he never knew how to take advantage of his opportunities. He had cunning, but not the sagacity of his father, and the consequence was he sometimes over-reached himself. A curious example of this took place in the disposal of his property. When he was eighty years of age, he made over all his money to his son by deed of gift, in order to evade the legacy duty; but his son, quite a young fellow according to Cornish reckoning, happened to die before him, so the money had to return to him, paying thereby a much larger duty than if it passed by will from father to son.

Eventually, he left it all to a nephew (not to me, I am sorry to say); and so the revenue got at least its proper share of tax out of the original proprietor of the Sarah Jane.’

‘What you have related are interesting incidents, no doubt, Mr Lane,’ observed Sir Algernon; ‘but they do not seem to me to reflect credit upon commercial morality.’

Mr Mark Lane chuckled triumphantly; and transferring his fingers from the arm-holes of his waistcoat to the pockets of his trousers, rattled his loose silver.

‘Pooh, pooh, sir!’ said he. ‘In the City, as everywhere else, nobody cries Stinking Fish: that’s all. I have bought horses of country gentlemen before now, which have not turned out quite all they were represented to be. If we do strive to over-reach one another, what of it? We are all on our guard.’

‘I call it Thieving,’ broke in the baronet, warmly; ‘or, I should rather say,’ added he, correcting himself, ‘that species of infatuation which is called in society Kleptomania.’

‘And rightly so called,’ observed Mr Frederick Foy reflectively, his rich Milesian tones falling like oil upon the troubled waves. ‘Stealing does seem to be a mania, and an unaccountable one with some folks. I am sure I remember men—ay, and women, too—of wealth and position who found it easier to keep their “tongues from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering”—and we all know what a temptation that is—than to keep their “hands from picking and stealing.” There was poor Tom Richards of Boylaboyne; he could no more resist a horse than he could fly. If he could not get it for money, why, he took it for love, in which they say “all’s fair.” He was hanged at last for stealing a mare at the fair of Taghmon. A beautiful beast she was, and Tom’s heart was set on having her; he offered the dealer three hundred pounds for her, but the rascal wouldn’t give her; he said he could get twice as much for her in Bristol. And so, rather than let such a beauty go out of the country, Richards ran off with her that night. The horse-dealer was an Englishman, and not up to our Irish ways; he couldn’t understand the spirit in which it was taken; and he had Tom apprehended, tried, and convicted. We did all we could to save him; but in vain. The law was very stringent then, and everybody knew it was not his first offence of the kind; so the poor fellow was hanged before our very eyes outside old Wexford Jail. There was old Lady Shanrahan of the Abbey, who used actually to pick the buttons off her own coachman’s back, as she sat behind him out driving. There was Sir Peter Hutton, who stole the pack of fox-hounds. And there was’—

‘Stole a pack of fox-hounds!’ we interrupted. ‘Mr Foy, you’re joking. It’s not possible!’

STOLE AWAY.

‘DIVIL a word of a lie in it. Many a time I heard my poor father tell the story. You see it was before my time. I remember many of Sir Peter’s later feats of sleight-of-hand, but none of them created such a sensation as this, which proved to be his most brilliant achievement, as well as his first, in what the newspapers would call a “long course of dishonesty,” ending only with his death. He had quite a passion

for hunting, and used to follow the hounds six days out of the seven. His place (a very nice property, worth five thousand a year now under proper management) lay up near the foot of the mountains, quite close to the County Carlow, and he was a member of both the Wexford and Carlow and Island Hunt Clubs. Each hunted three times a week, on alternate days, and Sir Peter seldom missed a "meet" of either from the time he came back from the continent until he died.

'He had been dreadfully wild in his youth, and was not much quieter, you may believe, when he came into his property. In a wonderfully short time, between hunting, and racing, and gambling, and all kinds of devil's tricks, he ran himself into debt, and had to fly to the continent, where he lived, nobody knows how or where, for twenty years. The estates were entailed, and could not pass out of the family; but his creditors took possession of them, and kept them till they had paid themselves in full out of the revenues accruing from them. Then Sir Peter came home; but so changed that those of his early friends who were still alive, found it difficult to recognise the harum-scarum, handsome young buck of former times in the grizzled, miserly-looking old man who now bore his name. He had acquired many strange habits during his long life of privation, and it was even whispered that misfortune had slightly unsettled his brain. Be that as it might be, however, nothing could unsettle his seat in the saddle; a more daring rider could not be found in the whole county, then, as now, famous for its horsemanship. Neither was his digestion impaired, nor his appreciation of good living deadened. His bachelor-dinners were soon found to be perfection, and his powers of drinking as great as those of any man half his age. These accomplishments were quite sufficient to make him an honoured and influential member of the two clubs, to which he joined himself on again coming into possession of his estates. He was not quite such a favourite with the ladies, I should say; but, then, he was a confirmed old bachelor, and returned their ill-will with interest. It was not long before he became the pride and boast of both Hunts for his masterly deeds in the field, never shirking a fence or a stone wall, never getting a fall, which was more surprising still, and always being in at the death.

'You may fancy the consternation, then, with which the Carlow Club received his intimation, at the opening dinner of his third season, that that would be the last year of his union with them. "I am getting old," he said, "and it is too far to come over to the meet. It tires me almost before the sport begins. Indeed, I am thinking of getting a pack of hounds of my own; and if I do, I trust as many of you as can will join me often."

'They tried to persuade him to alter his intentions, but in vain; he maintained that the long dull ride to the place of meeting was too much for him. All they could do was to make the rendezvous as near his place as possible, in the hope that if they had a pleasant season, he might be induced to change his mind, and not deprive them of the honour and glory of his company.

'But it really seemed as if all luck was going to leave them as well as Sir Peter. Never had they experienced such an unfortunate year. Half the times they were out, they failed even to find a fox; and after vainly beating about half-a-dozen covers, would have to return home empty-handed. The very dogs got out of discipline, and could not be kept together; and to make matters worse, the weather was unprecedentedly wet, and the bogs and marshes near the borders of the County Wexford unusually dangerous. As surely as an enterprising hound strayed away from his fellows when in that neighbourhood, he was lost for ever. No amount of searching was successful in restoring the wanderer

to his home. Not even a bone was ever found to mark the spot where he met his untimely end.

'At length, after six or eight of the best and strongest of the pack had disappeared in this mysterious manner, the whipper-in petitioned, with tears in his eyes, that that part of the country should be avoided. "It's bewitched they are, an' that's what it is," said he. "Shure, if not, the dogs would never run to their deaths in that way without lave or licence. There's no keepin' thim together once we get out near the mountains. It's leppin' into the bogs they are, an' drownin' themselves they are, one by one, an' there's no stoppin' thim." Unfortunately, it was only in that direction that they were always sure of finding a fox, and this circumstance, combined with their desire to accommodate Sir Peter, made the gentlemen very loath to change. "Andy was getting old and stupid," they said, "and not able to do his work. Let another boy be got to help him."

'The assistant was got; and Andy, indignant at the imputation of carelessness, and really grieved for the loss of his favourites, which, he said, he had "watched an' tended, summer an' winter, as if they was my own flesh an' blood," redoubled his vigilance; but the daily story was still the same: "One more unfortunate, weary of breath, rashly importunate, gone to her (or his) death."

'Sir Peter and a few other enthusiasts formed themselves into a volunteer corps of auxiliaries; yet, notwithstanding their exertions to keep the hounds in the path of duty, the list of missing after every hunt was more appalling than heretofore. The dogs began at last to disappear in couples.

'Then, horrified at the wholesale destruction that threatened the pack, the members of the club held a meeting, and decided on hunting only the upper part of the county, and giving a wide berth to the place that had proved so disastrous to them. They would lose Sir Peter, probably; they were very sorry, but it could not be helped; it was better to lose one huntsman than all the hounds; and (but this was a private observation made before his arrival) Sir Peter was not nearly so sociable as he had been at first. He scarcely ever waited for the end of a hunt, and never asked anybody to accompany him home to dinner now. But, contrary to their expectations, Sir Peter came as regularly as ever, and the hounds went even faster than before. The mystery attending their disappearance, body and bones, in this unaccountable way only thickened as the pack rapidly decreased to one-fourth its original number. The bog theory was, of course, now exploded, for they never went near them. It was impossible to suppose that they were stolen; they were too well watched for that; and besides that, what use could they be to any one else than their present masters? It was the middle of the hunting season, and every county and private Hunt were already supplied. This fact also prevented the master of the Carlow hounds from getting the gaps in his pack filled up. There was not a dog to be got anywhere for love or money.

'It was equally impossible to believe that the animals, sick of the disappointments that so frequently met them in their line of life, seeing their occupation almost gone, and unable to bear up against the scarcity of foxes, were yielding to the depressing influence of the month (November), and committing suicide one after the other, first burying themselves, to escape detection and save their skins from the contamination of the tan-yard. And yet what became of them, if not? Various were the rumours that circulated among the country-people, and indeed some of the gentry too. The belief in witches had nearly gone out, but the fairies were still in great force under every green rath and fern-shaded well. Every one knew their weakness for kidnapping, and accordingly, half the community set them down as the delinquents. It was whispered that the "good

people," as they were always called in familiar speech, were thinking of leaving Ireland for some more favoured clime, and, with the wisdom for which they were proverbial, were laying in a stock of beasts of burden; forgetting in their hurry that Ireland was an island. One old woman solemnly declared that, as she stood on a ditch to watch the hunt pass by, she saw a grain of fern-seed fall on the tail of the foremost hound, whereupon he vanished from before her eyes, as if the ground had opened and swallowed him up. Others asserted that it was satanic influence that was at work. This opinion was chiefly held by the God-fearing and non-hunting class, including many of the female relatives of the parties most concerned. Hunting, drinking, and bachelor dinner-parties, it was maintained, were just so many ways of serving the devil. The gentlemen of the Carlow Hunt had shewn themselves his most obedient servants in these respects, Sir Peter Hutton especially. They had sinned against light and knowledge, in spite of repeated warnings, and now they were abandoned to the tender mercies of the Master they had chosen. He was serving them as he had served Job of old, depriving them of their possessions one by one; only not having either the patience or the piety of the worthy patriarch, they need not expect to escape with their lives, as he did.

'It was believed that the Evil One accompanied them unseen on every hunt; that at the end of the sport he devoured a dog, as a foretaste of what was to come, and a token that the amusement was to his liking; and that, when the hounds were all gone, he would turn on the men, beginning with Sir Peter as next of kin.

'Whether it was the fear of this, or the scarcity of game, or the poorness of the pack, as well as the unpleasant mystery attaching to the whole thing, I can't say, but many of the gentlemen gave up attending the meets.

'It was debated whether or not the Hunt should be given up; but the master of the hounds and Sir Peter, and a few other veterans, declared their intention of seeing it out: as long as there was a single dog left, they said, they would hunt as usual, in spite of the devil and all his angels.

'At last a day came when only four of the original pack appeared on the field; but Andy, whose hair had visibly turned from iron gray to snowy white, from grief and anxiety about his charges, had managed to get together five or six young hounds not yet trained, nor even full-grown. "But shure they'll follow the others, the crathurs, an' keep together, an' help to fill up the place of them that's gone—the Lord be good to them!" said he, half apologetically, half in pride of his own cleverness. The exercises of mind through which the poor fellow had gone in his efforts to account for the mystery attaching to the fate of his dogs, and the many nights he had sleeplessly spent searching for the lost ones, had been almost too much for the old man's wits. The idea of their being stolen never entered his head for a moment. "Is it, an' me behind him?" he asked indignantly. They were bewitched, he maintained at first; but after having wasted a bottle of holy water in sprinkling the pack—marking each beast with the sign of the cross on nose and tail—without preventing the usual defection, he was forced to abandon that belief. Shortly after that experiment, he appeared at the meet one morning accompanied by a little wizened-looking, tailorish sort of a man, whom he made known as "Dandy Finnegan, the fairy-finder." Notwithstanding the wonderful exertions that this individual made with his right eye, which, according to popular report, had been accidentally anointed with fairy ointment, and was therefore gifted with the power of detecting the good people at all their tricks—and which certainly revolved in its orbit in a most peculiar manner, without the least apparent

connection with its fellow on the left—not a fairy was sighted for miles round, and yet two of the finest of the remaining dogs disappeared as unaccountably as ever. But Andy's courage rose with the disappointment. "It's nather fairy nor faind, but divilmint of some kind or other," said he, "an' I'll be up to them yet, so I will."

'This day, on which I told you Andy introduced the elderly pups to the notice of the field, was a most successful one. For the first time for months, the dogs were found to be all there at the end of the hunt. The master, hoping that the worst was over, went off to dine with a friend, and Andy, in high spirits, took the hounds to the kennel—towards the kennel, I should say, for the astounding news that greeted the master on his return home late that night was, that not only all the dogs, but even Andy himself, were missing. Nothing could be done in the way of searching for them before morning; but the master was too uneasy to go to bed; anxiety about the fate of his attached old servant, and a degree of doubt as to his own ultimate safety, kept him wakeful. Perhaps, after all, the prophets of evil were right, and the next thing he should hear was that Sir Peter too had vanished, and then—who next?

'He was out with the earliest gleam of day, preparing for the search; but the first person he saw coming into the yard was Andy, with a grin on his face that rivalled the rising sun in brightness.

"I've found them," he shouted, "I've found them, sir, every mother's son of them, as sleek an' as fat as butter, an' leppin' out o' their skins with havin' nothin' to do. But come into the house, an' I'll tell you all about it," he added, looking round him cautiously, as the servants began to appear, eager to hear his adventures. As soon as he was safely shut into the dining-room, he burst out: "Faith, sir, it's the greatest joke ye ever hard in yer life. But shure, I'd better begin at the beginnin', an' tell you how it come about. I had scarcely left yer honor last night, an' was just half way home, when who should come up to me there be Flanxy's public but Sir Peter Hutton. 'Good-night, Andy,' says he, the villin, quite frindly. 'Ye did well to-day,' says he, 'an' kep' the hounds well,' says he, 'an' here's a half-crown to drink their healths.' An' with that he rode off, an' in I went to get a drop, thinkin' no harm would come of it, for it was a could night surely. An' for the same rason I took the pups in with me, for they're tender yet, the crathurs; but I left the ould ones outside, not to be crowdin' up the place, an' I bid Mick—that's Flanxy's son, yer honor—the lazy young vagabone, keep an eye after them; but the never a mind he minded me, for when I cum out, the sorra a dog was to be seen high or low. An' Mick, he was off in the haggard playin' ball; an' he said he forgot all about them, but he hard them go off towards the mountains, as it wor, half an hour ago, an' he thought I was with them—the thirty young liar, an' I wasn't in the house five minits. Well, yer honor, I was at an amplash. I knew it was no use comin' home, for you warn't here, an' there was the poor young pups runnin' round an' smellin' the ground, an' tarin' mad to be after their mothers. An' I suppose the drop o' sperits I had had made me bould, for, says I, 'Whether it's divil or man,' says I, 'I'll go after them, an' not let the young ones be parted from their mothers, the unnatural bastards that they are to go off an' lave them.'

"An' with that off I set as hard as I could, for fear of changin' me mind, the pups before me never stoppin' at anythin', or liftin' their noses from the ground, excep' to give a long low cry, that went to me heart, now an' again. They made for the mountains as straight as an arrow, over hedges an' ditches, an' through the bogs, till the life was near frickened out o' me; but sorra bit of them would come back for me when I tried to turn 'im, an' sure

I hadn't the conshuns to lave thim go on be thimself, to their death perhaps. 'If anythin' happens me,' I says to meself out loud, to shew I wasn't afeard, 'the master'll have prayers said for the good of me sowl, an' I was with the priest a Saturday,' I says, 'an' I defy the divil an' all the powers of darkness,' I says quite brave-like; but me heart was in me mouth all the time, till we got past the bogs an' over the mountain into the County Wexford. Sir, you'll scarcely believe me, but, be the powers of whisky, an' that's the strongest oath I know, thim dogs never stopped till we retched the corner of Sir Peter Hutton's demeene next the stables! An' there they med a dash at the wall, as if they could go through it, scratchin' an' tarin', an' leppin', till the tears came into me eyes at the wisdom of thim, an' the dread of what was to cum next. I thought I'd drop when I hard Blazer's cry from the inside—you may well stare, sir, so did I, when the whole pack, that I thought dead buried, piped up to the tune I knew so well—the whole pack, sir, divil a word o' lie I'm tellin' you. There they were all givin' tongue, Piper an' Blazer, an' Fiddler an' Dicky, an' Dandy—I knew every note, an' I standin' on the outside. I saw through the whole thing then as plain as a pike-staff, an' I med up me mind what to do at once, for shure the hounds, the darlints, were makin' such a row, I didn't know the minit the men would be out to see what was the matther, an' maybe it's murdher me they would. So I beats off the pups from the wall, an' it's up to the hall-door I goes as bould as brass, an' knocks, an' says as how I'd a message for Sir Peter, most partickler, an' must see himself; an' in we went, dogs an' all, to the room where he was takin' his dinner.

'Sir Peter, sir,' says I, 'the master's compliments, an' he's sent you the pups. They're young, he says, an' tender, an' 'twould be a pity to part thim from their mothers yet a bit. An' he says he forgot to tell you they'll have the meet here next time, instead of at Borris, as the dogs is here, an' it's more convenient for you, Sir Peter,' says I.

'Very well, Andy,' says me gentleman, as cool as a cucumber, no more put out than if it was the most natural thing in the world to be after stealing a whole pack of hounds. 'Tell the gentlemen,' says he, 'that I'll expect them all to lunch first.—An' you had better go down with Peter, an' get some dinner,' he says, quite considerate; 'an' here's a guinea for you.'

'But shure I was dyin' to see the hounds again that we all thought dead or enchanted, an' I pretended to the boy that I couldn't eat or drink till I saw the young ones settled comfortably with their mothers; an' he took me out quite obligin', an' there they wor, every one o' the forty-five o' thim, sleek an' fat, an' well to do.'

'And do you mean to say there was nothing said or done to Sir Peter?' we exclaimed in amazement.

'O yes. They said at the luncheon that it was the best joke they had ever heard, and they made him promise that he would never think of leaving the club again, and, above all, that he would never attempt to get up a private pack of fox-hounds. Sure, they set it down to his oddity; and so it was, for after that, he never could keep his hands off anything he took a fancy to. The very last thing he did almost, a fortnight before his death, and he lying in bed paralysed in both sides, was to steal a lobster from an old woman. Ay, faith. He had got cold from swimming the Slaney, up near Salsboro, after a stag-hunt. They brought him to his town-house in Wexford, to be near the doctor's. But paralysis set in, and they could do nothing for him but let him die easy. One day, a fishwoman called at the door with

some lobsters in a basket. Sir Peter was very fond of lobsters, and thought himself a great judge of them, so the basket was brought up to the bedside to him. There were five or six in it, fine lively ones, just fresh from Kilmore. The man left it on a chair near the bed, while he went to ask the price of the biggest; and when he returned, his master told him he didn't fancy lobster that day, and would not have one at any price—to take the basket out of that. Down it went to the woman accordingly; but she refused to stir, and set up a hullabaloo, saying she had been robbed; there had been five lobsters in the basket when it went up, and now, behold, there were but four. The contention waxed loud in the hall, the man denying, and the woman asserting, when high above the clamour arose Sir Peter's voice in agony. All the household rushed to his room, the woman, tightly grasping her basket, bringing up the rear; and there they found him writhing in torture, with a lobster firmly attached to his poor flesh. How he managed to get it into the bed with him, nobody ever knew, but there it was, so firmly fixed, that no efforts succeeded in dislodging it, till its rightful owner generously came to the rescue. "Shure 'twould be a pity to part ye, yez got so attached all of a suddint," she said, as she placed it on a table, "an' so I'll just leave it with you, Sir Peter. There's not a soul in the town would buy it once they knew what its last male had been, an' shure the story will be more to me than the price of it. 'Twill sell the others for me bravely." And so it did; but Sir Peter did not care, for he died within a fortnight.'

We all expressed our approval of Mr Foy's narrative, which indeed, aided by the humour of the speaker, was so successful as to put, for some time, all the rest of the company out of conceit with respect to their capabilities for story-telling; but at last, the silence growing oppressive, said Damon Noyce to Pythias Freeman: 'Why don't you tell them that Arctic Story of yours, Jack, when you found yourself where that champagne we had at dinner never was—among the Rough Ice?'

'With all my heart,' assented Pythias bluntly. 'Here goes.'

ADrift ON AN ICE-FLOE.

'HAVING administered two pills, and drawn a tooth with a bullet-mould, in absence of the ordinary instrument, and thus finished my surgical duties for the day, I had fallen asleep on the cabin skylight of the good ship *Arrow*, Captain James Manly, seal and whale cruiser, then in latitude 71° 30' N., when I was suddenly awakened by a cry, which seemed to come from the clouds, but which proved to proceed from the lungs of the skipper in the crow's-nest, of "All hands ahoy."

'Considering myself included in the term, I arose from my vitreous situation, and, after being nearly deafened by the roaring of two cabin-boys, reiterating the order for the benefit of those below, and enhancing at the same time their message with a stamping noise sufficient to have kicked through most ordinary planks, was duly informed by the captain that he spied a large bevy of seals on the ice, and that we should soon be "among blubber."

'The seals were also seen by the crew of a Dutch vessel, and the two ships bore down toward them. As soon as our vessel approached, the foreyard was hauled aback, sails clewed down, and boats lowered from the davits in pursuit. As I had, on previous occasions, proved an expert rifleman, the captain kindly put me in command of the lee-waist boat, with a crew of six men, it being my function to direct the boat, and shoot as many seals as possible. After

rowing through some lanes of water, between the pieces of ice, we soon drew near the old seals, who gazed at us with large expressive eyes and erect heads, while the young ones lay basking beside their mothers, uttering wailing cries not unlike those of infants. Selecting a large ice-piece studded with animals, I desired the men to approach within a distance of about forty yards, and then shot all the old seals on it; we then rowed up, and the sailors killed the young ones with their clubs, knocking out their unfortunate brains without any apparent compunction. Although carried away by the first excitement of the scene, I could not but pity the poor young creatures as they looked up with their large, innocent, lustrous eyes, seemingly more in amazement than fear, at their ruthless destroyers.

'An animated scene now presented itself. Scotchmen and curiously-clad Dutchmen might be seen running over the ice, clubbing the seals; the reports of guns and rifles in all directions telling of the death of the older members of the bevy; while the shouts, cries, and songs of the men denoted the various successes of the crews.

'Leaving the men busily employed in the operation termed "flensing," which consists in the removal of the skin and blubber from the "kreg," or carcass, I employed the time jumping from one piece of ice to another, and shooting any seals that were within range, being accompanied by the ship's carpenter, armed with a boat-hook, which he carried in order to hook out any wounded animal that might chance to slip into the water.

'Sudden, inexplicable movements frequently take place amid the arctic ice, owing to which many unfortunate men are separated from their vessels, and left to perish. On this occasion, my companion and I nearly lost our lives from lengthened exposure, due to one of these rapid ice-motions. Having seen a number of seals at a distance on a large solid ice-floe,* we left the boat's crew, and started on foot towards them. Enticed by a desire to obtain their oil and skins, we ventured, with unpardonable rashness, far too far from the *Arrow*, unobserved of a signal which had been flying for some time at the mast-head for our return, and regardless of a strong, fast-rising breeze of wind; but after having nearly reached the seals, we came to a lane of water, which prevented farther progress, and forced us to retrace our steps. The wind, now risen to a gale, and a strong under-current, had, however, changed the ice we first crossed, and what at that time was safe had now become a mingled mass of broken pieces, surrounded by large holes of water. All the crews, obedient to the signal, had returned with their boats to the ship, and we also discovered, to our horror, the *Arrow* steering away from us, with her foretop-sail and mizzen unreefed. From this latter circumstance, we at once concluded that the wind had forced the ship from the floe to which she had been attached; and that, owing to the state of the intervening ice, it was impossible for the captain either to send boats or men to our assistance. The Dutch vessel was blown far to leeward, and almost out of sight. A thick fog began to drift speedily, obscuring everything around from view, and our situation became dangerous in the extreme. We made every attempt to proceed in the supposed direction of the vessel by running and leaping from one piece of ice to another, as the current drifted detached portions in contact, but after several hours' constant exertion, were forced, through sheer fatigue, to relinquish further endeavours. Selecting the largest floe that presented, we sat down to rest, cheered by the hope that, as soon as the fog should

clear, assistance would be rendered in some form or another; and as the duration of our stay was at best uncertain, made up our minds to be left for some time at least on the ice. No danger accrued from starvation as regarded food, since I fortunately had my gun with plenty of ammunition to serve for some time, and seals and birds were plentiful. The only danger, as we then thought, would arise from exposure to cold, so we began to defend ourselves from it as well as possible, the more so as the approach of evening foretold that we should probably have to spend one night at least on the floes. Accordingly, we chose a spot at the base of an "ice-hummock," and began building a semicircular wall of snow, strengthening it with portions of broken ice, to afford shelter from wind. When completed, we ensconced behind this wall, and as nothing more could be done in such limited circumstances, lighted our pipes, and smoked away the time, patiently awaiting a change of weather.

'A little later, the fog cleared away in one direction, and as the evening sun flashed out its farewell beams, we sighted the island of Jan Mayen in the distance, with the lofty volcanic peak of Beerenberg Mountain towering far above the clouds, and reflecting the rays of the parting sun from its snow-clad summit, which stretched upwards of six thousand eight hundred and seventy feet above the level of the sea. Owing to a deceptive nature in the light, we imagined the island to be only a few miles distant, and as the direction of the ice-stream seemed progressing towards it, entertained strong hopes of reaching land, in the event of not being picked up by our friends; these expectations being strengthened by remembrance of the fact that, a few days previously, we had observed a strong body of ice around the island, increasing in extent by accumulation of pieces drifting to its outside edge, and amalgamating with it. Most earnestly did we trust that we were on one of these drifting portions, and that the current would enable us to join the land-surrounding ice, and thus gain more solid footing.

'As night approached, the sun sank in pale gradations behind the ice-bound horizon, while between us and his fading rays nought could be seen save the shadowy forms of a few land-seeking birds; soon, however, as if to compensate for the surrounding desolation, the stars shone through the clear ether with a brilliancy and grandeur I had never seen surpassed, while the ice at a thousand points reflected back star-images. Countless other stars likewise floated on the surface of the water, caused by the ice-motion disturbing millions of phosphorescent animalcula. No sound broke the solemn silence, save that made by the water lapping against the ice-edge, or the shrill cry of a solitary bird longing for the companionship of its mates. Wrapping ourselves up as best we could, and lying close together for the sake of warmth, we soon sank to sleep, worn out by previous exertion.

'The duration of darkness being limited in these latitudes at certain seasons, we awoke at daylight with stiff benumbed limbs and wet clothes, our sleep having been very short. Large masses of white clouds, portending snow, hung overhead, and a cold biting wind was blowing. We mounted simultaneously to the top of a neighbouring hummock, to reconnoitre our position. No ship was visible, and, to our extreme alarm, we found that, owing to a change in the direction of the ice-stream, we had drifted considerably, and were every moment increasing our distance from the island. As the morning wore on, the wind again rose to a gale, and our motion through the water became more and more accelerated. Other masses of ice were driven with great violence against the floe on which we were standing, but as none appeared larger or more compact than the one we were on, we did not feel justified in abandoning it. Numbers of Burgomasters, Ivory Gulls, and Fulmar Petrels flew round every now and then with noisy screams

* A "field of ice" is a term generally applied to those sheets whose limits are undiscernible from the mast-head; a "floe" is similar to a field, but smaller, inasmuch as its limits can be seen.

and inquisitive gaze; large flocks of Rotges and Dovekies also passed on rapid wing, and, knowing from experience that these latter birds afford very good diet, I fired a shot among them, and brought down several, which we were hungry and glad enough to eat raw. The dry warm feathers of these birds proved useful, as we hit on the expedient of stuffing them between our bodies and the wet portions of our clothes. Having quenched our thirst with pieces of freshwater ice formed from frozen snow that had previously been melted, we regaled on our pipes.

During the forenoon, a dark-blue line appeared on the horizon, indicating our approach to a large extent of open sea, free from ice, and the surrounding lanes of water increased rapidly in number, length, and breadth. All hope of reaching Jan Mayen's Island forsook us; our only chance of escape now consisted in the event of being picked up by some vessel. A thick, heavy, blinding fall of snow commenced, adding greatly to our discomfort. We began also to suffer from long exposure to cold, and in vain endeavoured, by exercise, to keep up a proper degree of circulation. Our skins felt rough and sore to the touch, our lips excoriated and painful, and our eyes became swollen, red, and highly injected with blood, and I was afraid that we should both become snow-blind. In order to prevent such a calamity, being aware of the fact that it is not the quality, but rather the quantity of the light, exposure to which causes snow-blindness, I manufactured two pair of eye-preservers, by cutting four small round pieces of leather from my shot-pouch, leaving a narrow chink in the centre for the admission of light; this plan I adopted from having heard that the Esquimaux use wooden spectacles, on a somewhat similar principle; and from the use of these rude appliances we obtained the greatest relief.

An incident which occurred at this stage served to divert, at least for a while, our attention from more serious thoughts—namely, the appearance of a school of sword-fish playing in the water-lanes. We could not but admire the graceful movements displayed by these fish while disporting: sometimes, they shot with electric rapidity from the dark-green depths, while the waters hissed and sparkled around; at other times, they buried themselves in the trough of the swell, or chased each other in playful violence on the top. Suddenly, they all disappeared with a peculiar abrupt snorting noise; and their lengthened absence leading us to believe that they had taken themselves off for good, we began again our monotonous pacing, when a long-drawn sound, like that of distant surf, fell on our ears, and on rushing forward to the ice-edge to ascertain its cause, we found that it was due to the motion of a large bevy of seals, all endeavouring with frantic efforts to climb on to the ice upon which we were placed. At first, I was quite at a loss to comprehend the cause of their fear, but the reappearance of the razor-shaped fins and serrated weapons of the sword-fish, and the exclamation of my companion: "It's the *saw-fish* that's *gylfing* them!" enlightened me on the subject. At first, the seals paid not the slightest attention to our shouts or gestures, which were quickly elicited by the not improbable supposition that the combined weight and struggles of these animals would help to break up the floe; but the report of my gun, which I previously loaded with ball, and the death of one of their number, scared them to other neighbouring ice. The seal thus obtained proved of valuable service: before its body had time to cool, I cut a large slice of blubber from below its skin, which we "bolted" with wholesale avidity. Any one who swallows a glass of cod-liver oil on a cold day, will feel an almost immediate increase of temperature all over his body, because the carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen of the oil, in undergoing chemical change, quicken the respiration, and so give heat. This condensed seal-oil, alias

blubber, was much more fresh, palatable, and agreeable than the rancid cod-liver oils of commerce, and produced a warm glow throughout our systems, which continued for some time, and undoubtedly fortified us strongly against cold. The skin, placed below us during the night, prevented the snow from wetting our clothes, and served through the day to shelter us from the wind; while the flesh would have afforded us food for many days.

Towards afternoon, a severe swell, rolling beneath, caused the ice upon which we were placed to shoot upward and downward, while several heavy, dull, sounding reports in the immediate vicinity led us to conclude that the ice had begun to disintegrate. Portions of fractured ice were fretted off the floe edge, and we could feel a certain quivering motion below our feet, which soon changed into actual vibration. Although striving manfully to subdue each other's apprehensions, it became but too apparent that we were fast drifting out towards "the houseless ocean's heaving field." The nature of our feelings during this period was far too complex for any language to describe: moments of natural weakness would now and then present themselves, as our forlorn situation became more and more impressed on our minds; but since the evil which threatened could neither be averted nor subdued, we endeavoured by all means within our power to prevent giving way to dejection. But we had not long time for passive reflection, for, with a violent crash, the floe broke up, and the liberated swell from beneath dashed and swayed round us in a caldron of seething spray. Although it was difficult to keep our feet without holding on to each other, and using the boat-hook to prevent slipping, fortunately, the ice did not turn over, nor did the swell reach so near as to wet us. All round, the eager waves lifted up their glancing summits, as if shouldering each other in panting anxiety to receive us. Fearful as was the scene, it was full of grandeur. A wilderness of water stretched before us, and as the second night approached, we drifted fairly out into it, while only small pieces of ice floated near. As long as the light lasted, we endeavoured to secure as many of these as we could reach with the boat-hook, and piled them around the edge of our piece, in order to oppose as large a surface as possible to the action of the water. Although the drift-motion rather increased as we got further from the floes—which we surmised to be to the northward of our position—the swell diminished, and we thought, as the water had become comparatively smooth, that the sea had ceased to devour our little territory. Our fingers felt numb and stony from handling the ice, and it required powerful friction to prevent frost-bite: fortunately, we had taken the precaution not to wet our Shetland mittens, and these latter now became most serviceable. A tendency to languor and sleep was fast spreading over us, but, aware of the danger from this source, we only lay down singly to sleep, dividing the time by my watch into spaces of two hours; the "party" whose duty it was to be awake receiving strict orders to use violence if necessary to waken the person asleep.

The night passed drearily enough over us. During the waking hours, it required our utmost fortitude to elevate us above the pressure of misfortune we were forced to endure; and in spite of our best attempts to banish solicitude, transient melancholy forebodings would every now and then come athwart our thoughts.

On the morning of the third day, a curious and sudden change took place in the temperature, ushered in by a peculiar quivering in the air. The sun rose, and shot down abruptly upon us; the ice became slobbery and percolated with moisture: and we were subjected to a twofold danger, of which we had not the slightest previous conception. Hitherto, our danger had arisen from cold, wave-action, and

ice-change; now, our chief peril arose from solar agency above, and from the influence of the Gulf-stream below. We were probably in one of the horse-shoe channels, where the warm waters from some branch of the Gulf-stream press upon the cold waters from the Spitzbergen seas. The meridian where these waters meet is very variable at different seasons, and the isothermal lines are shifting and unstable.

'The same sun that was calling into being infinite varieties of animal and vegetable existences elsewhere, was melting away our only chance of life. Under the influence of the solar rays, the deceitful ice was simmering gradually but surely asunder; and the floe had now become a frail sheet between our feet and the cold depths of the polar sea. The *coup de soleil* of the tropics strikes down its victims with sudden and powerful stroke; but the northern sun was slowly consuming and rotting us to death. The noise of contending ice had given place to

A pulseless silence, dread, profound,
More awful than the tempest's sound:

the pieces around were melting and disappearing all silently, nothing but some feeble bubbles struggling up to mark the spot where they had become merged into ocean; we were hanging like a drop still sun-gilt on the giddy edge of life, not knowing what moment the darkness would engulf us, or when the spark of our life would be extinguished in the deep of eternity. We looked up to the sky above, to see only light fleecy clouds, fast dispersing before the sun; and down to the ice, slowly crumbling from beneath our feet: everything seemed undergoing a process of change, and never before was the volatile, transient, and cloudlike nature of life more deeply impressed on our minds. The tranquillity of the scene was in immediate contrast with the struggles in our thoughts; its silence and deep repose served but to stamp the character of our impending fate more awfully on our hearts. Every object seemed to bear evidence of abandonment and desolation, and our resignation was fast giving way to despair.

'The forenoon passed in midst of this distress, when a loud exclamation from my companion made me look towards the horizon, where the sails of a bark were visible coming up in our direction. As they drew near, we took off our outer clothes, hoisted the latter on the end of the boat-hook, fired shots from the gun, and made all the signals within our power to attract attention. We had soon the satisfaction of seeing that our signs were observed, as those on board the vessel hoisted a Hanoverian flag at her mizzen, and then dipped it twice, as a token. A boat was lowered, the steersman of which was furnished with some "Hollands" for our use, which stimulant quite revived us after our watery and icy ordeal, and we were most hospitably received on board the bark, where we obtained every necessary comfort.

'The captain spoke Dutch; but seeing me shake my head, tried German; all I could answer, however, was: "Es thut mir Leid dass ich jene Sprache nicht spreche." I then essayed English; but he quite exhausted his store of that language by pointing to himself, and saying: "I capitain." French, too, was equally useless. So, after a laugh, we gave up conversation. A chart being brought, he indicated by signs an intention to sail north-east. Having written a log on board the *Arrow* up to the day on which we had separated, I drew our former position, which was north-west-by-west of his course on the map—placing dots all round the figure, to indicate that we had been among seals—and had the pleasure of seeing the course quickly altered to that direction. We again entered the ice; and two days after, sighted the *Arrow*, whose crew was still prosecuting, but with faint hopes of success, a search for us.'

'We are much obliged to you, Mr Freeman, I

am sure,' said Lady Crawley graciously, 'for the relation of your interesting experience. Certainly no dangers on dry land can be compared with the perils of the ocean.'

A deep sigh, accompanied by a gesture of dissent, drew general attention to Mrs Frederick Foy. The lovely little brunette had turned quite pale, but was now blushing at the public sensation she had involuntarily occasioned.

'What is the matter?' inquired Lady Crawley kindly. 'I trust I have said nothing to give you annoyance, Mrs Foy?'

'No, madam: it is not your fault,' returned the bride, with a trembling in her voice, like the piteous flutter of a bird: 'it was only my own weakness and folly. I never can think of a certain peril that happened to myself, not long ago, without a shudder, and your words recalled it to me; for it was a peril on dry land far worse than any danger of the sea.'

'If it would not pain you to narrate it,' pursued her Ladyship, 'perhaps you will be so good as to tell us what it was.'

'To think of it is as bad as to tell it,' answered the little bride with tearful eyes; 'and perhaps the telling it may rid my mind of the recollection. Besides, madam, I owe you an apology for my late rude interruption, and my story will at least offer an excuse for that, I think. It is but a personal adventure of my own, but my husband declares it ought to be printed, and entitled

THE EVIDENCE OF A JAMAICA WITNESS.

'THE story which I am about to tell is not for the purpose of lauding myself as a heroine—neither is it to prejudice the reader against the race to which belong the perpetrators of the black deeds which made the year 1865 a sad and mournful one in Jamaica—neither is it with the intention to discuss the merits or demerits of the colonial government; I merely relate as facts my own dreadful experience of that terrible outbreak, because I have heard it said in England that there was made much ado about nothing, and that we, the white inhabitants of Jamaica, were seized with a panic throughout the island on account of a local disturbance, which a few policemen might have put down.

'The first time that I heard anything definite about the disturbed state of the people, was one day that I had come into Kingston from Spanish Town, where I was staying with some friends; when at home, I lived with my father and only sister, not quite seven years old, near Morant. My mother had died nearly three years ago, and I had no brothers, so that I was my father's housekeeper. I was engaged to be married; and it was for the purpose of meeting my *fiancé* (now my husband), whom I expected from England in the mail-packet, that I had gone to Spanish Town, as I had no friends with whom I could stay in Kingston. So the morning that the arrival of the packet was telegraphed from Port Royal, I started for Kingston by the first train. I was, however, disappointed: he (my now husband) had not arrived. Of course, I felt very sad; but I hoped he might have written, and so I determined to wait until the European letters were delivered at the post-office, to see if there was a letter for me. I need scarcely say that the arrival of a packet from England is a most important affair in the colonies, and that the post-office is crowded with people, every one endeavouring to be first, so that anxious as I was, I had to wait some time before I could manage to get near the delivery-window. On my way up from the wharf, I fancied that the number

of people in the streets was greater than is usually to be seen, even on a packet-day. Duke Street, which is generally a dried-up watercourse, with rickety houses on each side instead of banks, and a stray pig or some John Crows* for inhabitants, was quite crowded with negroes in holiday attire; and in Harbor Street, on the way to the post-office, I was pushed about by the negroes, who buzzed to and fro. At the post-office, the crowd was without any doubt much greater than I had ever seen it since I had become a regular attendant, and the people seemed so unusually rude and boisterous, that I several times thought of going away, and returning in the afternoon, when quiet was restored; however, as the only friends I knew in Kingston lived in North Street, at the top of the town, and as cabs are not to be had for merely beckoning with the hand, as in England, I feared to undertake so long a walk in the hot sun; so I remained slowly walking up and down beneath the balcony of the post-office. Now and then, as the negroes passed me, conversing in their rapid broken English, I could hear the words "Queen," "Missy Queen," "No write;" which brought to my recollection that I had heard at different times that the people were discontented at something or other, and they expected a letter from the Queen, which was to redress all their grievances; and now, none having come by the packet, they were disappointed and angry. After waiting more than an hour, I at last got my letter; it was to tell me that Fred was delayed a fortnight longer than he had expected, but would surely come out by next packet; so I brushed my tears away, and tried to think of a fortnight hence, and to wish that I could sleep all the time.

"I reached the station a little early for the five o'clock train to Spanish Town; so I got into a second-class carriage, where I could rest undisturbed, and read over Fred's letter. Hitherto, I had always travelled first-class, but I was going to be a young doctor's wife who was at the bottom of the ladder, so I thought I could not too soon begin to practise economy. I tell this for two reasons: one is, that if I had travelled in a first-class carriage, I might not have been led to take the step I did, and which led to such terrible results; the other is, because I know an impression exists in England that the English Creole girls in the West Indies are vain and extravagant, and have none of that material in them which makes a good wife for a poor man. I hope Fred has found me as sensible as an English girl. Whilst I sat conning over Fred's letter, before the train started, I was interrupted by some coloured and black people opening the door of the carriage in which I was; but seeing me, one, a rather pompous half-caste, turned to his companions, and said: "We eight, we get a whole car to ourselves;" so, to my great satisfaction, they left me, and looked into the next compartment, which I presume they found empty, as they all got in, and the carriages are made to hold eight people. For the few minutes before we started, I could hear their voices as they talked incessantly, and as all black people do, all at one time, but I could only now and then catch a word of their conversation. As in the streets, I heard the words "Queen," "British government," "Taxation." I also heard names mentioned, names which I did not know at the time, but I have often heard since. Now, when I bring to mind the disjointed words that I overheard, I can attach importance to them; but at the time I only thought they were part of a clamorous dissertation on the politics of the island, conducted in the noisy and boisterous style which a negro always gets into if the least excited. Of course, when the train began to move, I lost entirely every word that was said, although I could still hear that a loud and energetic conversation was being carried on. I fancy I must

have fallen asleep, for I was suddenly startled by the stopping of the train. I thought at first that we had arrived at Spanish Town; but on looking out of the window, I saw we were surrounded by bush on both sides, and as there is no station on the line, I surmised rightly that the stoppage was caused by some stray cow or horse having got upon the rails. The sudden lull after the rattling of the train, made every other noise seem clear and loud, and I could now hear that the conversation in the next compartment was still carried on in louder tones and with more energy than ever. Probably, too, the speakers had raised their voices to overcome the noise of the train, and still continued to speak at the same pitch; however it was, I now heard whole sentences quite distinctly. The pompous man appeared to be the chief speaker; he had evidently worked himself up to a state of great excitement, as he dilated upon the wrongs of the coloured man. "Look, my friends," he said—"look at de black man in dis island of Jamaica, and look at de white man. De white man—he governor, he judge, he planter, he master. And de black man—what is he?—de scum ob de cart. He sweat de brow, and get noting. No, my friends, de day gone by. De Queen of England she good, but she know noting. She hear parcel ob lies, how de poor negro taught in de schools, and get good advice how to conduct herself in de station dat Providence give him; but"—The train starting at this moment with a shrill shriek, I could not hear the remainder of the speech; but my curiosity was excited, and I sat with my ear close to the partition, hoping to hear what the "but" led to; however, the vibration, when my ear touched the partition, and the inability to make out anything at all if it did not, prevented me catching more than an occasional word. I suppose that it was as a penalty for eavesdropping, but I had not listened many minutes before I was startled by hearing my own name—that is, my surname—so I fancied the conversation was connected in some way with my father. This made me feel a little uncomfortable, for though I knew my father was a very just, good, and charitable man, and much respected in his position, yet he was strongly tainted with the old blood prejudices, and held that though the utmost consideration and kindness should always be exhibited to the negro, and their social ties respected equally with those of the white man, yet, that servants they were, and servants they must always continue to be; consequently, he was not a favourite with the black politicians. Still, I thought to myself on consideration, there is nothing to be frightened at. My father is a magistrate, and an officer in the Colonial Corps—nothing is more natural than that his name should get mixed up in a political discussion.

"When we arrived at the terminus, I found my friends waiting for me, and, as we drove home, I related all my troubles and little adventures of the day. When I came to the part of having overheard my own name, my host—whom I shall call Mr Bentley—asked me a number of questions as to the appearance of the men, what names I had heard beside, and whether I had ever seen them before; altogether, he seemed anxious; and although he reassured me, I felt it was only in words, and that he had some misgivings, which I now naturally began to share. The longer I thought, the more I conjured up all sorts of unpleasant imaginations; not that I ever for a moment conceived the enactment of the horrible tragedy that did take place, nor, indeed, can I say what was the nature of the calamity that I was fancying to myself might occur. I only know that I felt uneasy on account of my father, and I determined not to prolong my visit in Spanish Town.

"The directions which my father had previously given me were to return home with Fred, if he should arrive, who was to hire a carriage and horses in Kingston; but if he should not come, I was to

* The negro name for the turkey buzzard.—Ed.

remain at Mr Bentley's until my father came to fetch me, which might not be for five or six days, as he was very busy at the time. We have not in Jamaica the regular daily postman, with his welcome rap-tap, to bring us news from absent friends; nor the morning paper, the chronicler of hourly events; no fast-flying trains, which make distance a matter of no moment; no time-and-space annihilating telegraph; one short line of rail and telegraph between Kingston and Spanish Town being the only representatives of these marks of progressive civilisation. Not hearing from my father the next day, and feeling too anxious to await the interchange of letters by the tedious and irregular post, I determined, if possible, to set off for home at once. On making Mr Bentley aware of my desire, he wished me not to go; but at last, seeing how my heart was bent on it, he kindly promised to send his eldest son to take charge of me.

'The morning, the most delightful part of the tropical day, was delicious, and the cool invigorating atmosphere, redolent with jessamine and frangipanni, imparted a little of its elasticity to me; and as I listened, on my way to the station, to the thrilling song of the mocking-bird, and watched the tiny humming-birds darting amongst the mimosa bushes, I began to think that I was very foolish, and was giving my friends a deal of unnecessary trouble, and myself uncalled for anxiety. Still, in spite of this sensible reasoning to myself, I could not drive away a sort of cloud, an under-current of uneasiness, which clung to me, as a gentle breathing of conscience does to one who is almost, but not absolutely, sure of being in the right path. Was it because I had heard my name mentioned in the train, or was it presentiment?

'We (Mr Henry Bentley and myself) left Spanish Town by the six o'clock train, and arrived in Kingston in less than three-quarters of an hour. Here some delay was occasioned by the difficulty of getting good horses. Whilst I waited at the *Date-tree Hall* (hotel), I questioned the landlady as to the state of the country. She said that she had not heard anything particular, but that the coloured people had been very disturbed lately, and that they held meetings every night in Kingston, which were always followed by loud singing through the streets, but that she had not heard of their doing anything to annoy any one. The eight o'clock gun of the *Aboukir* boomed across the water from Fort Royal as we drove out of Kingston. The sun was now getting hot, and there was a dead calm, which almost always preceded the coming in of the sea-breeze, significantly called the "doctor." Tropical heat, unless tempered with a breeze, is almost unbearable, and I felt my spirits fall with the rise in the temperature; I daresay, too, I was a little vexed at having been delayed so long in Kingston. There is nothing particular to tell about our journey to Morant. We reached St David's, which is about half-way, about one o'clock, where we rested our horses, and arrived at Morant between five and six in the evening. How I longed, as we crept along the rough roads, for a fast express-train; how I prayed and besought the driver to go a little faster, with always the same meaningless reply: "Es, missy; go faster now." At last, we reached home. I could scarcely conceal my impatience when little Nelly, my sister, ran out to meet me as I got out of the carriage. "Where's papa?" I said, kissing her, in one breath. "Oh, papa went away this morning to St Thomas, and then he will go to Spanish Town for you," she replied. Here was a nice thing. I had rushed off in a giddy hurry, and now papa would be so disappointed and angry—if he could be with me—for disobeying him. However, there was no help for it but to remain quiet; and now that I had got home, and found everything as I had left it, all my anxiety vanished, and though disappointed at my father's absence, I was quite

myself enough to do the amiable hostess to my kind protector.

'Before I go on further, I must unveil to the reader a little of the internal economy of Orange Grove and its inmates. As I said before, our family consisted of my father, a hale man, past fifty years of age; myself, not quite nineteen; and little Nelly, just seven. My father was a magistrate, and held a commission in the militia. His income was, however, derived from his estate, or rather estates, for he had two: one a few miles from Morant, toward the mountains; and another near St Thomas-in-the-East. As he was partly his own overseer—that is, he did not leave the working of the estates entirely in the hands of the managers—he was pretty actively employed; and thus it was that he had now gone to St Thomas, as it was commonly called, but correctly St Thomas-in-the-East, to distinguish it from St Thomas-in-the-Vale, which was at the other side of the island. All our servants were negroes. There was first, Old Duke. His real name was Le Duc, inherited from his father, who acquired it from his owner when he was a slave in Martinique. Then there were Duke's son and daughter, Jacob and Lotty, both of whom were born on the estate, and with their father were considered almost part of our family. There were, besides, two or three household women-servants; and one man named Rollo, who especially looked after our riding-horses. Of course, a great number besides these were constantly employed as field-hands, but they did not form part of the household. The groom, as we called him (Rollo) was a huge negro, six feet high, and broad in proportion; the muscles of his brawny arm rolled like thick ropes under his oily skin with every movement; his short bull-neck shewed his bull-like strength; and his small dark eyes and heavy projecting lips gave a ferocious expression to his face, which contributed to strengthen the bovine similarity. He was decidedly an ugly negro; yet, for all that, Rollo had an admirer. Whether impressed by his manly proportions, or inveigled by alluring words, or—and more probably—without any tangible reason, Lotty was deeply enamoured of this giant; and matters had progressed so far and so favourably, that they had agreed to celebrate my wedding-day by a similar ceremony for themselves.

'As long as I can remember, I had a sort of antipathy to Rollo. When I was quite a little child, I exhibited openly my dislike to him, then a child himself. As I grew up, I never would send him a message, or in any way have anything to do with him; and I often asked papa to employ him on the estate, and get some one else into the stables. On the other hand, I regarded Old Duke with the greatest esteem; indeed, I may say affection. He had carried me about when I was a baby, and during all my life he evinced the greatest love for me. There could be nothing too good with him for "Missy Gerty." Jacob, too, I thought very highly of, as a faithful and zealous servant; and I treated Lotty, who was my own particular attendant, quite as a confidant. So much for the inmates of Orange Grove. As to the house itself, it was a pretty West India villa, situated a little distance outside Morant. It was attached to, but not absolutely on the estate, being in a little lawn and place of its own, or, as we call it in Jamaica, a penn. Behind the house was a small grove of orange-trees (whence its name), and a path running through this led into a patch of garden, which at the time I write of was thickly planted with bananas. The boundary of this garden was a high cactus-fence, which surrounded the whole penn; and about the centre, in the thick of the bananas, was a small hut, temporarily erected to shelter a man who guarded the bananas at night against the ravages of the pigs.

'This little sketch will make tolerably clear

the remainder of my story, to which I now return.—After supper, I sent for Old Duke, and asked him how things were getting on. He told me that papa had gone in the morning to St Thomas, and was to sleep that night at the estate manager's; and that he intended the next day to go on by way of the Palisades to Port Royal, in order to leave the horse on which he rode, there, with a gentleman to whom he had sold it; from Port Royal, he would get a passage up the harbour in the first man-of-war's boat going to Kingston, and then take the train to Spanish Town. In reply to our further questions, he told us that "de coled people angry; dey say de magistrates hab one law for de white man, and anoder law for de black man: I don know notin' meself about des matters; I only hear about it, and dey say one Bogle in it." He also told us that the hands on the estate had taken a holiday for themselves, "and even dat fellah, Rollo, he gone too, Missy Gerty; he had fellah, dat Rollo." That the negroes should take a holiday, was nothing uncommon, as the least excuse is sufficient for them to do so; so, altogether, I did not apprehend any mischief, and I only longed for my father's return. Mr Bentley and I being both a little fatigued, we separated early for the night; and he bade me adieu and good-night together, as he purposed to leave before daybreak, and so should not see me in the morning. Tired as I was, when I got up to my room, I could not sleep; and after tossing restless on my bed, I got up, and wrapping myself in a dressing-gown, I stepped out on the veranda of my bedroom, and sat down in a rocking-chair. The night was lovely, with a loveliness unknown out of the tropics. A deep stillness prevailed, and the silence of nature could be almost felt, as it were a gentle spirit clinging to, and influencing everything around—a silence not the less deep, but even more marked, when broken by the chirping of the tree-crickets, and anon by the distant bay of a dog, or the hooting of the horned owl—a silence, too, made solemn by the occasional rustling of the palm-tree fronds, as the faint breath of the land-breeze from the mountains sighed through them. Delicious perfumes floated through the air, concocted by the burning rays of the mid-day sun in every leaf and blossom, and now yielded to the cool dewy atmosphere, every breath of which was balmy and fragrant. My bedroom looked out to the front; being a corner room, two of its walls—as in most tropical houses—were jalousied; and outside ran a veranda, roofed in, and also jalousied, but provided with large open spaces like window-frames. Close to the angle of the house-wall grew a large tamarind tree, so close that its delicate branches and long bean-like fruit hung over my veranda; it did not, however, interrupt my view, for I could see the dark plumes of the cabbage-palms clear against the night-sky, as they stood like so many sentries along the avenue; and further on, the thick boundary of pimento trees, the aromatic odour from which mingled with the perfumes of the jessamine and frangipanni, which grew in a little thicket close by; while, still further on, like a faint line, was the horizon of the distant sea.

'Surrounded by such influences, unconsciously the while gently rocking myself in my chair, it was no wonder that I fell into a waking dream—from my mother, in her happy home far above those glittering worlds, to Fred, already on his way across the mighty ocean, whose blue waves rolled within sight; to my father, gone after his naughty child—when I was recalled to myself by the little timepiece on my dressing-table striking two o'clock. I started up at once, and hurried to bed, where, thoroughly tired, I soon fell fast asleep. It seemed to me that I had not been asleep half an hour before I was awakened by a prolonged cooing sound, which, when repeated in a few seconds, I recognised as the sound which the negroes produce by blowing into a

conch-shell—a noise something like the tooting of a horn, but not so harsh. On looking at my watch, I found it was just four o'clock; so that I had been asleep about two hours. This was the first time that I had heard this instrument blown as it were with a purpose; for I had heard, within the last few weeks, that the people had gatherings, and that they collected by the sound of a conch. Then I did not give it more than a passing thought; but now, hearing the noise so near, and papa being away, and my mind a little disturbed, I felt a sort of vague, undefined sensation akin to fear stealing over me. I first thought of asking Mr Bentley to stay until papa came back, and then I felt ashamed of the trouble I had already given him; so I lay still, and listened to the blowing becoming more and more distant, until I believe it lulled me to sleep; nor did I awake until it was broad daylight, and past my usual hour of rising.

'I awoke; but not refreshed. Whilst still unconscious to the realities of life, yet roused to feel dimly external impressions, there seemed a weight to press on me—a something, but I knew not what—which, when I was entirely awake, defined itself into the same feeling of discomfort; of apprehension, may I say, without being thought superstitious; of the same presentiment that overcame me in Kingston—presentiment so frightfully realised and so soon. That very day took place those horrible atrocities which devastated so many happy homes, and will for ever be a black spot in the history of Jamaica.

'A rehearsal of the horrors of the negro insurrection is not, further than I am concerned myself, to be part of my tale; neither am I going to repeat the list of atrocious cruelties thus perpetrated. They are now a matter of history, and have probably been printed in every newspaper in the world; indeed, at the time I did not know exactly what was going on at Morant, and it was from the newspapers afterwards that I learned the most truthful accounts. But all through that terrible day, from time to time, I heard the most dreadful reports of the proceedings of the insurgents; doubtless, many exaggerated and many untrue; but all sufficiently horrible to keep me in a state of perpetual alarm. Little Nelly remained close to me the whole day, and Duke rushed in continually, to tell us of new horrors—how this acquaintance of ours was cruelly murdered; how a villa was burned to the ground; how that a report was spread that Morant Town was in flames; then that troops were down from Up Park Camp; and there was an open battle; and later in the evening—and this was, alas! too well founded—that the negroes were dispersing in small bodies to ravage the country-houses.

'As far as my individual experience went, except the desertion of the place by every negro but Old Duke and Lotty, the occasional sound of a conch, and a few distant shots, I did not see or hear anything until evening.

'Nelly and I were at tea (for we had adopted that English and most social meal) about seven o'clock; the short tropical twilight was rapidly giving way to dark, when I fancied that the conch-blowing, which had been very faint all day, was getting more distinct. I rushed out on the veranda, and found that my fears were verified. Dreadful thoughts flashed through my mind. Here I was alone with a little child, and no one to take care of me but an old negro servant, whose protection would be of little avail against a furious mob. I knew what my own fate would be if I fell into their hands. What should I do? O papa! O for papa and Fred! And yet, what could two do against so many? What should I do? Would they come here? Where could I go? Such thoughts ran confusedly through my mind. My suspense was soon set at rest. Old Duke rushed in. "Run, Missy Gerty, run; dey comin' up here! all mad, drinkin' white rum and blood. Dey burn up Massa Costa's penn, and kill

everybody. Dey no tink in de town dat you here, missy; dey tink you in Spanish Town. No time lose. Where Missy Nelly?"

"There was indeed no time to lose. I could now hear the wild shouting of the men and the screaming of the women—sounds more like the voices of fiends than of human beings; I could see the bright flames of the torches dancing amongst the pimento trees; a few moments, and they would be within the boundary of our little demesne. The worst had come, and I felt less afraid than when in suspense. I ran to my room, seized a shawl that I had worn in England when at school there, which would serve as a bed in the bush; I threw a dark crape mantilla over Nelly, to hide her white dress, snatched the loaf of bread off the tea-table, and taking Nelly by the hand, and with a prayer to Heaven for protection, I left the house—dear old Orange Grove.

"I have explained that the whole penn was surrounded by a cactus-hedge. Those who have not been in tropical countries may not perhaps know that such a fence is absolutely impenetrable by any ordinary animal. Composed generally of a double row of the tall cylindrical cactus, the stems of which are thicker than a man's arm, and from fifteen to twenty feet high, and covered with spines two or three inches long, as hard as steel, and as sharp as needles, a horse or a bullock would not attempt to force such a barrier. I suppose an elephant or rhinoceros could break it down without being hurt; but the only animals that I have seen get through were the pigs, and these could scarcely do so, but that near the roots of the cactus the thorns dry and fall off, and then they rub their hard skins against any natural opening, and soon make a smooth passage. In our fence, there were three gates: one a large entrance at the bottom of the lawn, and two smaller ones to the right and left of the house. That to the left led out on the road; the right opened into cleared land, in which a quantity of Guinea-grass was now growing. A small footpath passed through this field to a coconut plantation. Towards this gate, I directed my steps, preceded by Duke, and holding Nelly by the hand, with Lotty bringing up the rear. I could now distinctly hear the wild demoniac howling, as if of beasts let loose for carnage. They were within the bounds of the penn. We rushed on by the well-known path. Oh, how little I ever expected thus to leave my home. And poor papa, much as I wished for his protection, I felt thankful he was safe. We were almost at the plantation-gate, when suddenly Duke stopped and put his hand over my mouth. "Dere somebody dere, missy," he whispered; "but dey no see us go back for a bit." "Where to, where to? O Duke, where shall we go?" said I. "To de hut in de bananas for de present. Quick." Softly we turned, crossed, by another path, through the orange-plantation, through the leafy bananas, and into the little hut; and then exhausted, I fell on the ground. And now the work of destruction was going on in the house. I could hear the crashing of the furniture as it was thrown out of the windows, or furiously demolished, as if it were alive, and could satiate the savage revenge that instigated the furious mob. I could hear the wild screams of the women—desecration of that sacred word to name them so—as they called for my father and myself; then a lull; then again a wild shouting, which filled my heart with fear. Poor little Nelly lay nestling into me, sobbing and trembling. Duke stood at the entrance of the hut, peering out into the darkness, and Lotty—Where was Lotty? I had not thought about her for some moments, and now, when I looked for her, she was not to be seen. If she were unfaithful, I was lost. I asked Duke where she was. The poor old man pretended not to hear me at first; but when I touched his arm, and repeated my question, he quite sobbed out: "I lookin' for her, Missy Gerty." I

knew this was no place to remain. If they thought I was hidden at home at all, they would be sure to look for me here; so I told Duke we must not wait, but that he had better go back to the plantation-gate, and see if all was clear. "And, O Duke, dear old Duke," I cried, "don't desert me. I have no one now but you to trust." "Missy Gerty," he replied, "may I burn in de big fire for eber and eber. Sure, I your fader now, my little chile, when my own dear massa away." And now we were alone, a child and a girl, whilst round us blood and destruction raged. There had been less shouting for the last quarter of an hour, and I was in hopes that, having completed their work of destruction, they were gone. In this hope, however, I was soon disappointed, for, in a few minutes, another wild howl burst forth, and from the direction whence it came, I guessed the cause of it—they had found the cellar. Oh, how I prayed that they would empty it, drink up every drop it contained. I knew there was a quantity of new rum there sufficient to intoxicate two hundred men. They were at it now, I felt sure, as the noise had ceased.

"Duke had now been gone over half an hour, and I was anxiously looking out for his return, especially as the moon was rising, and in a short time we should lose the friendly darkness. I peeped out of the hut—yes, it was growing light. "Oh, here he comes at last, thank Heaven!" I said to myself as a dark form appeared pushing through the bananas. The next moment, Rollo stood before me. My first impulse was to rush from him, but a moment's consideration shewed the uselessness of such a step, even if I had not Nelly to take care of. Besides, after all, Rollo might have been sent by Duke to take care of us. In any case, I determined to put a brave face on. "O Rollo," I gasped, "I am so glad you are come. You won't let any one hurt us, good Rollo?" "No fear ob dat, missy," he replied—"no fear ob dat; dey no hurt nobody Rollo protect. I Captain Rollo now. No more groom de horses; no more say 'Massa.' I gentleman now; turn about fair-play. Missy grand lady, no care for Rollo; now Rollo gentleman, he love missy, and take care ob her, and no one hurt her, and she soon love Rollo." Sick at heart as I heard these words, I still pretended to misunderstand him, hoping, indeed, against hope, that perhaps he only meant to express his fidelity, and I said: "And you will take me to papa, Rollo, and little Missy Nelly." "Ho, ho, ho!" he chuckled. "To papa and Massa Fred, eh? Ho, ho, ho! Massa Fred say: 'No; no hab Missy Gerty.' He say: 'Missy Gerty love Rollo too much. Go back to Rollo.'" And now the cloven foot appeared. Excited by rum, and working himself into a passion as he looked on his helpless victim, he created wrongs in his imagination that I never did him. Indeed, I never injured him in any way, or oppressed him as mistress of the house in which he was servant. He continued: "Eh, Missy Gerty grand lady; no speak to Rollo, but scold and abuse. Rollo scum ob de eart; Rollo not good enough for de horse; only black nigger; not fit for Lotty. No want Lotty now; hab Missy Gerty. He good Rollo now. Eh, missy, dat it?"

"Words could not express my horror, nor could I tell here the language with which he insulted me. I knew, as he scowled on me, his dark face visible by the light of the risen moon, that he would not be moved by entreaties. I tried a bribe. "Rollo," said I, "bring me and Missy Nelly to papa, and he will give you five hundred dollars." He only laughed at me, and said he had more dollars than papa now. "White man work now," he said; "black man king." "Rollo," I returned, for I knew that he was a coward at heart, "think of poor Lotty, and how angry Jacob will be; and" (in my desperation uttering a falsehood) "I expect both Lotty and Jacob, and old Duke to be back for me in a few minutes." "Jacob!" he replied. "I squeeze Jacob,

I jump on him, I"— He suddenly stopped his bombast, and at this moment I heard a rustling sound as of some one coming through the bananas. He had caught it also. Hastily glancing over his shoulder, he darted at me, and seized me round the waist, hissing in my ear: "No screech, or dey come and tear you limb from limb." I preferred death to going with such a monster, and I held tight to the edge of the hut whilst I cried for help. My strength would, however, have availed nothing, but he was afraid to delay another moment, as the rustling had become louder, as if from a person running. Muttering: "Tell Jacob, and I kill you," he threw me on the ground, and disappeared in the direction of the plantation-gate. Arrant coward as he was, I felt certain that the moment he was assured that neither Jacob nor Lotty were forthcoming, he would return. Indeed, I was surprised at his relinquishing me so easily, for, as may be supposed, it was not probable that Jacob was possessed of such delicate feelings of family honour as to render it dangerous for Rollo to trifle with the affections of his sister; neither, as I found out afterwards, was this the reason why Rollo anticipated Jacob's wrath. Horrible to think on it, I was the cause of a furious jealousy between them! I now felt that I must not remain a moment longer in the hut. The rustling noise had ceased after my scream, which fortunately had not attracted attention, if, indeed, any of the marauders remained in the ruins of the house. I guessed Rollo would watch to prevent my escape at the only path which led from the garden; therefore, my only hope lay in getting through the cactus-fence.

'Catching hold of Nelly's hand, and whispering to her not to be afraid, and to walk quietly, I slipped out of the hut, wending my way through the bananas in an opposite direction to the path. The moon was now shining brightly, throwing the shadows of the huge banana-leaves in fantastic shapes. However, I had to fear real dangers, and not fanciful resemblances; so I pushed on towards the fence, hoping to find a hole made by the pigs in their inroads for their favourite fruit. Suddenly, little Nelly stopped me, and drawing back, whispered: "What's that?" I listened for a moment, and heard the rustling noise again, but this time accompanied by short grunts. A joyful pang shot through my heart; there were pigs in the garden. Turning slowly toward the noise, we came on two large pigs busily employed on a bunch of bananas. The moment they saw us, they gave a snort, and whisked away straight to the hedge. We followed as quickly as we could in the same direction, and, to my intense joy, came on a large hole where they had gone out. How thankful I felt! But for the pigs, against which we waged a constant war, we should never have got out. I now pushed little Nelly through, and then dragged myself after her. The field which we had got into was covered with Guinea-grass, and though a very good place to hide in at night, in the daytime the way to the hiding-place could very easily be traced; so I determined to cross the field, if possible, and on through the cocoa-nut plantation, and get into a cane-piece, where we might easily conceal ourselves. We soon found a pathway which led across straight into the cocoa-nut plantation, which we followed easily in the bright light of the moon, then under the dark cocoa-nut trees, and at last into the cane-piece, where I thought it best to remain for the night. Creeping a little way in from the edge, I broke down five or six of the canes, and spreading my shawl upon them, lay down with Nelly huddling close to me; but not without first kneeling down and praying to Him who watches over all that trust in Him, that He would, in His mercy, take us under His protection, and keep us from harm.

'Poor little Nelly was soon fast asleep; bodily fatigue had worn her out—she was not yet old enough to realise the horrors of her situation—whilst I watched, weary,

but sleepless, until the morning dawned. All through the night, I heard the dismal tam-tam, the wild howling and savage shrieks. When morning came, I knew that we could not stay where we were during the day, for, although a good place of concealment, it would be impossible to support the fierce rays of the sun pouring down on our heads; so, with the first gleam of light I awoke Nelly. The poor child stared about with a surprised look at first, and then began to cry, and asked to be taken to papa. However, I comforted her, and made her eat a bit of the bread which I had not forgotten to bring with me. We then cautiously emerged from our hiding-place in the canes. There was no one about. Which way should I turn? Away a little distance was the residence of a friend; but alas! the probability was, that its inmates had fled, or were perhaps massacred. After a moment's consideration, I determined to return home, and steal in by the way I had left; and if I could avoid Rollo, get under the protection of Duke and Jacob. I had little difficulty in finding the path; and hurrying on, so that the day should not overtake us, we arrived at the cactus-fence. I soon found the hole which the pigs had made, and was about to help Nelly through, when I heard a rustling on the other side. "Poor pigs," thought I, "I shall never disturb you again; you are welcome to every banana in the place!" Still, I thought it better to be cautious; so I listened attentively. The rustling was louder than the pigs had made last night, and then I thought I heard footsteps. Could it be a man? The thought had scarcely occurred to me, when I distinctly heard a cough. This was enough. With a palpitating heart, and without a word, I lifted Nelly in my arms; she felt very heavy to me, for I was not very strong, but I feared an incautious tread, and I knew that all our hope depended upon silence. Whispering to her to be silent, I retraced my steps into the pathway for a few yards, and then turned into the thick Guinea-grass, until I reached a high patch, where I put Nelly down, and crouched beside her. We were not more than ten yards from the hedge; and in the still of the morning, I could plainly hear the rustling noise growing nearer and nearer, until it came quite close to the fence. Whoever it was, had found the hole, and was now pushing through it. I had little doubt but that it was Rollo, who only waited for morning to track us. Presently, he found the path, and I could now hear the footsteps coming toward us. All the previous evening, at each new fear or cause of alarm, Nelly used to start and utter a little short cry; and I felt, if she could not restrain herself now, we were lost. Without a moment's hesitation, I took my pocket-handkerchief from my pocket, and put it over her mouth, which, as she opened—doubtless to say she would be quiet—I pressed it firmly in, and thus completely gagged her. Simple as this little harshness was, it went to my heart, it seemed so cruel to my little pet; but it was not safe to trust to her resolution at such a moment. I had scarcely secured her silence, when the footsteps passed our hiding-place onward in the direction we had followed last night. After waiting a few moments, I stood up, and my head being just even with the top of the grass, I could peer out without danger of being perceived. Yes; it was Rollo: he was standing a little further on in the path, staring round him; he evidently thought himself at fault. I sunk down again, my heart beating so violently I could scarcely breathe. Nelly had taken the handkerchief out of her mouth. I kissed her, and told her why I had done it; the poor darling put her arms round my neck, and whispered: "Do it always, Gerty." I now fancied I heard the steps returning; so I gagged Nelly again, who now opened her little mouth, and then hid her head in my bosom. Yes, nearer and nearer they came—nearer and nearer, until they stopped opposite where we lay. I almost held my breath; but louder

and nearer they grew, and Rollo stood looking down on us where we lay. A moment, and I started up, and stood looking at him. It was now broad daylight, and I felt bolder than last night.

"Rollo," said I, in the bravest tones I could assume, "go away; you are a bad man. Touch me, and I shall scream for help."

"No scream, missy; I only come to gib you dis," he replied, with a ferocious grin, holding up a fragment of my dress, which must have been torn off in the cactus-fence. "Come along," he continued; "gib slip last night; Rollo not fool twice." As he said this, he suddenly stepped forward, and seizing me, lifted me off the ground; then clasping me close to him, he dashed into the path, and ran as if he did not feel my weight.

"I screamed aloud for help; I saw Nelly standing half-hidden in the tall grass; I heard her pitiful cry; a mist came over my eyes, and I fainted.

"My story is nearly finished, and little remains but to tell how, when I recovered consciousness, I found myself lying in my father's arms, with little Nelly crying over me; and to account for, as well as I can, some of the circumstances which I have narrated. You must, however, graciously remember that I am not possessed of the romance-writer's magic power of being ubiquitous, and of following the movements of all the *dramatis personæ*, or of reading their thoughts or motives, and must therefore be content with the explanations given by my father and Old Duke.

"As Duke had told me, papa had gone to the St Thomas estate the morning of the day that I arrived home. He slept there that night, and was detained by business the next day, so that he did not leave for Port Royal until the afternoon, when he arrived so late, that he stopped the night. The next morning, the first news that greeted him was the outbreak at Morant; and hearing that a French man-of-war steamer was going down, he obtained a passage in her. On his arrival, he found Orange Grove had been subjected to the fury of the insurgents, so that, short of being destroyed by fire, it could not be a more complete wreck, and little Nelly was nowhere to be seen (he thought I was still at Spanish Town). Duke was the only person to be found in the penn, and he told papa all that he knew—how I had returned with Mr Bentley—how he had left us in the garden-hut; and that when he came back, we had disappeared. Without losing a moment, papa returned to Morant, and got some friends to join him, all well mounted. They first rode back to Orange Grove, and into the garden, to seek for any clue the hut might afford; and then, providentially, they heard my screams. To ride round by the gates would take some time, so, dashing into an outhouse near the garden, they seized two or three *machètes*,* and with a few strokes felled sufficient of the fence to let their horses through. They now could see Rollo running toward the cocoa-nut grove, and poor Nelly standing on the pathway crying. Need I tell how one picked up the child, whilst the others, dear papa leading, pressed on the flying ruffian, who, seeing his danger, dashed me from him—too late, however, for his own safety, for a few paces more, and he lay stunned and bleeding on the ground. From Old Duke I gathered that, when he went back to the plantation-gate to reconnoitre, he found Rollo and Lotty there; that it was Rollo, recognised only by Lotty, who had frightened us on our first attempt to go out, and who afterwards persuaded Duke to allow him to go fetch us; that, finding we did not come, he (Duke) went himself to the hut, and found we were gone; that he searched in vain for us all that night, and was still seeking us when he met papa.

"I was quite ill for more than a fortnight after-

wards; but I recovered sufficiently to be married very soon after Fred's arrival. When first he saw me, he scarcely recognised me, I looked so ill and changed. If my hair had been dark, I am sure it would have turned white, as I have heard often happens as the result of fright. As it is, my hair being auburn—ill-natured people call it red—which is, I suppose, a fast colour, it has not changed, but certain premature lines on my face shew how intensely I suffered. Fred, however, tells me that they are wearing away, and that I shall soon be as fresh as ever; but the lines traced on my memory will remain while I live. We are now residing in England. As spring came, Fred thought the change to a bracing climate would set me up; and we went for a visit, intending to return to settle in Jamaica; but finding a favourable opening in England, and knowing that the prosperity of Jamaica was rapidly declining, he determined to remain; and now he is doing so good a practice, that I hope soon I need not consider it extravagant to travel as a first-class passenger. Next year, Nelly (now nearly ten) is coming to school, when papa will sell his property in Jamaica, and spend the rest of his days near us.

"There is one person more whom I hope you are a little interested about—poor Old Duke. Well, he lives with us in dear old England, and strives to make our little garden as like Orange Grove as he can. He, the only faithful servant of them all, left every one belonging to him, that he might still take care of his "little chile, Missy Gerty."

"What a volume of romance is human life!" observed Mistress Jane Brown earnestly, when this story was concluded. "Who would have imagined that among us folks, met here by chance, around a single dinner-table, there should be so many whose experience in life has been so remarkable!"

"You must remember, madam," said Sir Algernon, smiling, "that the company—or rather the occasion—is no common one, but an EXTRA-ORDINARY."

If a British baronet were capable of being withered by one contemptuous glance, Sir Algernon Crawley would have been shrivelled up on the spot, and pervaded the apartment in minutest particles of dust. A choking sensation was experienced by us all, as though this had really happened. We pitied Sir Algernon, and would have mitigated his position had we dared; but we were also afraid of Mistress Jane Brown. She had made a philosophical observation, which anybody else would as soon have ventured to question as to rob a tigress of her young, and Sir Algernon had rejoined to it by a little joke! Even Lady Crawley, prompt as she was to resent her husband's being pecked by any hen except herself, shrank from his defence. She only fanned herself with desperate energy, and cast upon the awful silence the inquiry, Whether anybody was going to tell another story. There was no reply. She did not like to give her mystic nod and rise from table, for that would have been to acknowledge Mistress Jane Brown's supremacy: it was a moment of great embarrassment: but as the mouse sometimes helps the lion, so it was fated that her Ladyship should receive material assistance from a very insignificant quarter; namely, from the Waiter. I have not mentioned him before, because he only

* Long heavy knives used for cutting cane.—Ed.

came into the room when he was rung for, generally to bring brandy and water to Mr. Bilkins. But he was a superior person for his station in life, and indulged in sententious and axiomatic remarks, such as were very appropriate to an official at *The Wordsworth*, and gave him a local colouring. But although he by no means hid all his talent in a napkin, it was as a waiter that he was unrivalled. He did not say: 'In a moment, sir,' and leave you waiting for your indispensable red pepper for an indefinite time; nor did he exclaim 'Coming, sir,' as other waiters use, when, in spite of that cuckoo note, they are obviously going to somebody else. Above all, like the great Napoleon, he had blotted the word Impossible out of his dictionary. His answer, when you asked for anything—no matter what—was invariably: 'Yes, sir; cert'ney, sir.'

Thus, coming into the Coffee-room with one of Mr Bilkins's 'sixpenn'-orths, just at the moment when Lady Crawley was inquiring for the second time: 'Will somebody tell us another story?' he answered with his usual glibness: 'Yes, mum, cert'ney, mum.' A reply which convulsed us all.

'Hear, hear!' ejaculated the bagman, though some of the company looked scandalised at what was certainly an undignified proceeding, and her

Ladyship drew herself up: 'Silence, ladies and gentlemen, if you please, for the Waiter's Story.'

Now, the waiter was full of Stories, as any man who sees an endless variety of his fellow-creatures, and is treated by them as a piece of furniture, or dumb waiter, is sure to be; but he was far too clever to tell them, under such auspices. He was embarrassed, of course, and, as he afterwards confided to me, was almost on the point of covering his face with his napkin, and rushing from the room, when a *Deus* suddenly appeared to relieve him of his difficulty, in the person of Apollo himself.

'Ladies and gents,' cried the Waiter: 'the Sun's come out;' and so he had.

In an instant, we had all risen from our chairs to observe the phenomenon, which is about as rare in that locality as an eclipse is anywhere else. The view from the windows was less like nature than those glorified scenes that Turner paints, and which seem too exquisitely beautiful to be real. A terror seized us lest it should once more melt away before our eyes, ere we could go forth into the splendour; and in one minute *The Excursion* was deserted, and the philosophic waiter left alone in it, like 'the Solitary' himself.



